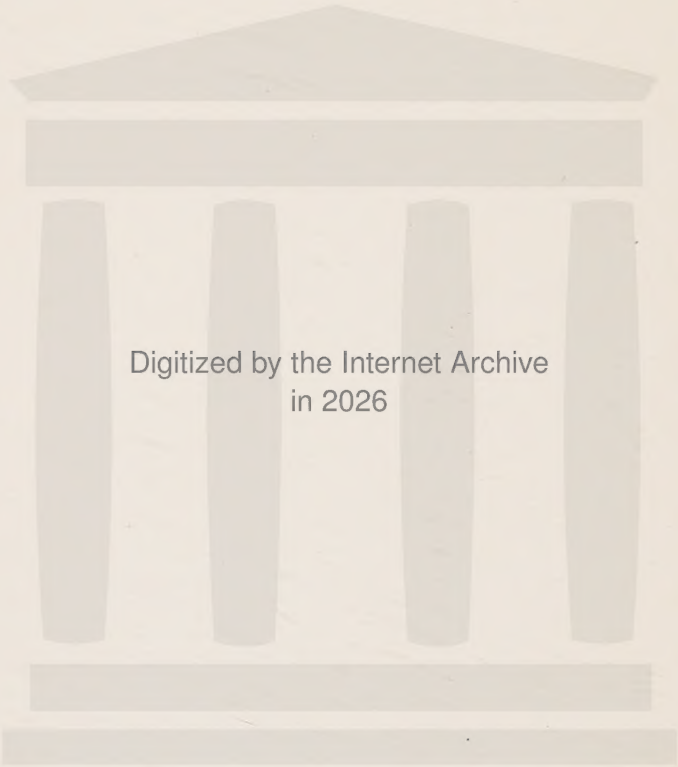
ENGLISH LITERATURE IN ITS FOREIGN RELATIONS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ENGLISH LITERATURE

IN ITS

FOREIGN RELATIONS

1300 TO 1800

By the Same Author

A Dictionary of European Literature, *designed as a companion to English Studies*. 2nd Impression.

A General Sketch of European Literature in the Centuries of Romance.

Introduction to Poetry. 2nd Edition, 2nd Impression.

PETRARCH

There is a tomb in Arqua:—reared in air,
Pillared in their sarcophagus repose
The bones of Laura's lover; here repair
Many familiar with his well-sung woes,
The Pilgrims of his Genius—BYRON

ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN ITS
FOREIGN RELATIONS
1300 TO 1800

By
LAURIE MAGNUS

WITH 8 PLATES

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TO MY WIFE

PREFACE

TEACHERS and teachers' teachers are becoming united in the opinion that the study of English literature will then be most accurate and profitable when it is founded on a European basis. Its students should retrace the path which its makers, courtly and popular, have followed through the centuries. Thus, Sir Henry Newbolt, to quote an authority at once expert and recent, says : " What can be done is to provide, on whatever scale, a map of the long course of literature as it flows through the English landscape. It will not be a map of our own island merely," he adds, " but a survey of the inhabited world." How far, if at all, the contents of this volume supply the kind of information thus indicated its readers will judge ; my object has been to place the successive chapters of English literature, between 1300 and 1800, in relation to the literary history of other countries. The survey stops short of the nineteenth century : the influence of Byron and Victor Hugo, the Scandinavian revival, Russia's awakening, Darwinism, and other manifestations, seem to me to require a larger scale than has here been adopted. Perhaps I may make that attempt later on. The material for both " maps " was collected in my *Dictionary of European Literature* (1926), and I have utilized some paragraphs of a little book, now out of print, which I wrote in 1906 on *How to Read English Literature*. Earlier still, in a contribution to *National Education* (1901), I wrote : " If the new learning is to replace the old in our national system

of education, English literature will bear the burden of that discipline in taste and character, which has been borne so honourably and so long by the classics of antiquity. And it will prove superior to the classics, and more agreeable to modern ideals, inasmuch as it is more directly connected with the needs of practical life." It will be a pleasure to me if I may be deemed, after many years, to have promoted, however little, those ideals.

With regard to the illustrations, I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. M. H. Spielmann, the leading Shakespearean iconographer, for permission to use the copyright photograph of the early proof of the portrait of Shakespeare in Edmund Malone's copy of the First Folio, 1623, engraved by Martin Droeshout before the alterations introduced for the issue. The volume is in the Bodleian, and the Librarian, who has been so good as to sanction the photograph, has also permitted me to use the photograph of the Bodleian's portrait of Dryden. Spenser is reproduced by permission from a photograph of the original painting in Pembroke College, Cambridge, and Messrs. F. Bruckmann, Ltd., of Munich, have supplied me with the photograph of Tischbein's "Goethe in Italy".

L. M.

Chilworth,
Surrey.
November, 1927.

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ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN ITS
FOREIGN RELATIONS
From 1300 to 1800

CHAPTER I
Chaucer

ENGLAND entered comparatively late, though still much earlier than some other countries, the republic of letters in Europe. Chiefly, she was retarded by the backwardness of her language, which needed the discipline and reinforcement supplied by intimate contact with a language more fully developed in vocabulary and construction: such contact as the Latin languages (French, Italian, Spanish, etc.) derived from their classical mother-tongue. Partly, too, England's retardation was due to the late date at which her national legends were linked up with those of other nations. It was not till the beginning of the twelfth century that the Welsh chronicler, Geoffrey of Monmouth, in a Latin history of the Kings of Britain, invented, or pretended to discover, a Roman ancestor, Brut (Brutus), at the head of those Kings, thus associating English history with the history of Rome and its Trojan founder. A recent writer[1] has confessed that he would "like to see the Fables of the Britons restored to their place

[1] Professor G. S. Gordon, *The Romans in Britain*. The Brutan ancestry of British kings was abandoned by Polydore Vergil in his Latin *History of England*, 1534.

in the first chapter of our histories" ; and a main effect of their old appearance in that place was to bring the native legendary lore of England into sisterly association with that of Roman-descended peoples, and thus to link up the distant islanders with Continental natives of the Latin race. Arising out of both these causes, the backward language and the story-isolation, it followed that the native story-material which English song and legend could furnish was worked up on the French side of the Channel. There was a *matière de Bretagne*, a British matter for the romancers, among other matters to which we shall come back, but it was romanced, or turned into literary moulds, by other than British skill. The craft of the *trouvères*, who collected, and of the *jongleurs*, who recited such tales, was cultivated, as their names indicate, in the country of Charlemagne, the heroic Emperor of the Franks, whose own exploits had provided another and even a richer story-matter, continuously increased since the ninth century. Thus, England was retarded by her language; her native tales were isolated from the common stock ; and the legends of King Arthur, which formed the *matière de Bretagne*, were romanced in France, the common clearing house of all *chansons de geste*, or verse-tales of heroic deeds (Latin, *gesta*).

Chief among the countries of Europe which entered the republic of letters a little earlier than England were Italy and France. Accordingly, when English writers were first looking for laws and rules, by which to regulate the expression and mould the literary form of their thoughts, they could refer to Italian and French examples. These examples were not then perfect examples. Italy and France were not so much in advance of England, their precedence in time was not so long, as to have established conventions of style based on exhaustive practice and

full experience. Though they had something to teach, they had still much to learn when England came to them for lessons in style. But the point is, that England did so come to them. English writers did seek help and authority from Italian and French precursors. They sought it openly, candidly, consciously. Geoffrey Chaucer (died 1400), for example, started his literary work by translating a French book, and acknowledged in sundry places specific debts to Italian writers ; Sir Thomas Malory (died 1471) stated definitely that he was relying on an old French book for his story-matter of King Arthur; and these acknowledgments of English debts to foreign models, which are only two examples among many, have a real and a deep significance. For (1) the English books in question could not have been written if the foreign models had not been available, and (2) the English books so written served as models in their turn for prolonged practice in England. Thus, one of Chaucer's borrowings from Italy opened the line of the English novel, and Malory's French books about Arthur influenced writers of English books on the same subject right away through Spenser's *Faery Queen* to Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

The English novel, then, was founded in Italy, and the English epics of Spenser and Tennyson, both of which deal with King Arthur, a theme contemplated, too, by Milton, were founded in France. But if the first English experimenter in the one form thus relied on an Italian example, and if the first English experimenter in the other form relied on old French books, and since both forms became established in English literature, it is clear that Italy's primacy in the one form and France's primacy in the other are important facts for English students. If the first great independent English writers owed a part of their ability to clothe their thoughts with literary form in

the English language to writers in countries outside England, it is seemly to travel to those countries in order to take proper cognizance of the debt.

How Italy's primacy helped English literature is second to the question of *why* Italy was in advance of England in literary skill. Italy took this lead because she was the nearest country in modern Europe to the latest spring of civilized life in ancient times. The first classical spring had been in Hellas, or ancient Greece, of which Athens, in Attica, was the leading State. The second spring, sown from the first, and repeating its flowers with a difference, had been in Italia, or ancient Italy, of which the Roman Republic, later Imperial Rome, was ruler. Behind Italia (Rome) was Hellas (Athens), and behind ancient Greek civilization were yet older types of civilized life, including, among others, that of Israel, from whom came the Hebrew Bible. Behind modern Europe, then, lay Antiquity : the Antiquity of the Bible and the Classics ; of Hebraism, Hellenism, and Latinism.

The latest of these in time was Latinism, the legacy of pagan Rome ; and besides being nearest in time, it was nearest, too, to modern Italy because its flowers had sprung on her own soil. Italy's lead in literature among the nations of modern Europe may be ascribed to the fact that modern Italy and ancient Italia were one country, that the Italian language had unfolded from the Latin language, and that, to a vivid imagination, there was a continuity of sentiment and tradition, as well as of language and locality, extending from the Rome of the Pagan Cæsars to the Rome of the Christian Popes.

This, briefly, is the *why* of the priority of Italy over England in literature. The *how* follows from the *why*. The priority became helpful to England because Italian writers had found in the Latin writers of their

own country models of style such as the first English poet sought in vain in earlier English writers. These Italian writers had to go a long way back. They had to go back to sources unavailable in England. They had to go back from modern Italy to ancient Italia, from the Christian Italy in which they lived to the Pagan Italy which had flourished before Christ. They had to seek rules and guidance for the use of their present Italian words from the rules which had guided the use of words by past Latin writers. They had to mould the forms suitable for their own thoughts out of the forms perfected in ancient Rome. They had to rifle Antiquity—Antiquity in its latest guise of Latinism—in order to furnish Italian literature with the elements of style ; and these tasks, difficult in Italy, were impossible in a country without a classical past. They were facilitated under Italian conditions by the kinship of a common soil, and by the sense of continuity, through all the changes of the centuries, in language and other bonds of patriotism—excepting always religion—between Italy past and Italy present.[1]

The first modern man in this sense, and the literary link between ancient Rome and modern England, was Francis Petrarch, the chief of the Italian writers, whose inspiration Chaucer acknowledged. Petrarch (1304–74) deliberately, and very industriously, and with enduring success, revived his Italian countrymen's Latin era. He could not revive the civilization of ancient Greece (Hellas), out of which that of ancient Rome had sprung, because it was very laborious

[1] Even in religious literature Cardinal Bembo (1470–1547), an eloquent and erudite Italian Father of the Church, employed Pagan images for Christian theological figures: "the gods" for the Deity, etc. So that, though Christianity differentiated the ancient Latins from their descendants, the Latin language imposed some of its forms on Christian Italian writers about religion.

to learn Greek in his day. There were no Greek grammars, no Greek-Italian dictionaries, no texts of the books of Greek writers. Printing had not yet been invented, and no copies of the manuscripts, or hand-written texts, of ancient Greek writers were available, or could have been read fluently if they had been. A few uncouth teachers of Greek wandered from Constantinople and elsewhere to the cities of Italy at that date, one of whom Petrarch managed to get hold of. But his Greek studies did not take him far : he tapped his way through a manuscript of Homer's *Iliad* with his friend, Giovanni Boccaccio,[1] in Florence ; but Petrarch, for want of means to study Greek, was impelled to be a Latinist, not a Hellenist, and, more positively, he chose Latinism because his intense Italian patriotism associated his country's Latin past with her Italian present. Marcus Tullius Cicero, the " Tully " of literate Europe's later worship, was Petrarch's constant delight, pre-eminently his *cicerone*, his guide. To Petrarch in Italy in the fourteenth century A.D., Cicero in Rome, in the first century B.C., was not merely orator and philosopher, not merely a model for literary style and human conduct, but an example for statecraft, and a fellow-countryman. Petrarch consulted Cicero as a modern English Imperialist might consult Disraeli. The distance in time was much vaster, and there was a difference in dialect between the Italian pair. But these differences were more seeming than real. Latin in Italy had never been disused.

[1] 1313–75. Boccaccio's chief work was the *Decameron*, a collection of a hundred tales, told by a company of ten Florentines to beguile a ten-days' (Greek, *decameron*) holiday from the Plague at Florence in 1348. " Fiammetta," the literary name of Boccaccio's liege-lady, who is one of the company of ten, fell a victim to the plague, and the same fate befell " Laura ", the liege-lady of Petrarch. See, further, page 81 below.

It was still the common language of the Christian Church ; it was the language of diplomatists and scholars ; it was the mother of the so-called " Romance " languages, descended from the language of ancient Rome, and in Italy particularly mother and child were the language of one and the same people : Latin, though it had unfolded into Italian, was equally and at the same time a native tongue. Petrarch wrote Latin as easily as Italian, and, patriotically, with more gusto. He sought to revive his countrymen's Latin era, not only for its perfected literary forms and complete command of a written language, but also for its lessons in statesmanship and in the freedom of action and opinion at which enlightened statesmen aim. He would have revived Greek, if he could, for he guessed at the intellectual value of Hellenism. But Greek would have been revived as a dead language, embalming ancient treasures for modern use. Latin he treated as a living language, and loved as his own, his native tongue ; he recommended the Roman view of life as a living culture, the use of which would renew in modern Italy the virtue of man as a social being.

> We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakespeare spake ; the faith and morals hold
> Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung
> Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

So wrote Wordsworth in 1802 ; and if we can imagine his appeal resounding a thousand years hence, when the language of Shakespeare, though English yet, may be stranger in English ears than that of Chaucer, and the faith and morals of Milton may be overlaid by ten centuries of religious and social experimentation, and the works of both may be laid aside in mouldered copies preserved by chance in some distant and deserted ruins, we shall understand

a little better *why* Petrarch consulted Cicero, when he was seeking for his country speech, morals, faith, virtue, and the titles manifold of what he invoked, in a famous *Ode* to Italy, as " the Latin blood of old ".

The virtue of men in society : This was a wider aim, inclusive of many human liberties, than the extraction of rules from a classical language for the guidance of writers in a country without a literary past. But the smaller aim included the greater : the part involved the whole. By perfecting the art of literature, Petrarch established a standard of the art of complete living. He revived his countrymen's Latin era with a very clear object in view. Italians in the fourteenth century should see life whole, as Cicero had seen it. They should see it as a spectacle of human effort in a large, free, sane, pleasant world, where words waited on ideas, and shape waited on design, and citizens obeyed the law, and rule and liberty fitted each other like the cog-wheels of a machine. This " Humanism ", as his reforms came to be called, would improve all Italy's arts at once—her art of writing spreading to her art of government, her art of loving spreading to her art of living. So Petrarch wrote Italian love-poems and erudite Latin letters, a Latin epic and Italian songs ; so he studied Latin manuscripts and Greek pothooks, and played a part in politics and diplomacy, in pursuance of his constant desire to build bridges between the two epochs of the Eternal City. He was the first modern man in medieval Italy, the first ancient Humanist in modern Rome. He was at once a Christian and a Ciceronian : not a rebel against the authority of the Catholic Church, yet a pioneer of the liberties of the free State.

That division was to become wide. Church was to arm itself against State—the tradition of authority against the tradition of liberty—in the religious

wars of the sixteenth century, as important to literature as to law ; and those wars, passing into the territorial wars, which extended into the twentieth century, were laid up, it is not fanciful to say, in the Latin texts from which Petrarch extracted new rules of conduct and art for the citizens of his Italy—and beyond. Yes, Italy and beyond. We shall come back in Chapter IV to the harvesters of Humanism across the Alps, who carried Petrarch's tools of criticism with them to the more positive peoples of Northern Europe, and changed the Italian Renaissance, or the rebirth of classical culture for modern use, into the German Reformation, which applied its conclusions to religion. But Petrarch went before the Renaissance. He was a scholar, not a reformer, a modernist not in a religious sense, a harbinger of springing life in Europe.

England caught the flush of the New Learning. Medieval passed into modern literature along the Italian road. That wonderful road across the Alps, by which Greece and Rome (Hellenism and Latinism) were brought to England, was trodden by Geoffrey Chaucer (*c.* 1340–1400), the son of a London vintner, on his Italian journey in 1372. King Edward III sent him to Genoa and Florence on a commercial mission about wool—a clear sign, if evidence be wanted, of the breadth of the humanist idea, and the close relationship of men of letters with affairs. Chaucer, extending England's trade, extended her literature as well. In Florence, he met Petrarch and, probably, Boccaccio. His meeting with Boccaccio is uncertain, but if he did not meet him in person, he met him in the spirit ; if not in Florence, then on the Alpine pass, trodden later by so many missionaries of culture, England's literature climbed to meet Italy's ; and Chaucer first, as we saw, climbed to meet the greatest Italian of his day—the ardent, aspiring, gentle

humanist whose recourse to the Latin classics of his own country re-invented the classical note in modern Europe.

Chaucer caught from Petrarch and Boccaccio, and taught to future English writers, a certain blithe attitude towards experience, which brought more power to English literature than is measured by any specific obligation. Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864), in an "Imaginary Conversation", makes Chaucer say to Boccaccio and Petrarch :

> "I will attempt to show Englishmen what Italians are : how much deeper in thought, intenser in feeling, and richer in imagination, than ever formerly ; and I will try whether we cannot raise poetry under our fogs, and merriment among our marshes."

This conversation, though "imaginary", is true. Chaucer, contemporary with the Italian writers, and meeting at least one of them in Italy, did measure the deeper thought, intenser feeling and richer imagination, with which the vision of the Latin past had enlarged the mind of the Italian present. He did try to raise merriment among English marshes, thus proving a recent definition of Humanism as the era when "the Pagan view was once more proclaimed, that man was made not only to toil and suffer, but to enjoy"[1]; and he did try to raise poetry under English fogs, thus proving the dictum of another recent critic : "Poetry was removed from the regions of Metaphysics, Allegory and Theology, and began to be re-animated by the old classical principle of the direct imitation of Nature".[2] The fogs of theology, allegory, metaphysics were scattered by a direct ray of the Pagan view, that human enjoyment, and not only toil and suffering,

[1] Sir Richard Jebb, *Cambridge Modern History*, i, 533.
[2] Professor Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, i, 300.

was a part of the whole duty of man ; and this ray, caught by Petrarch from Cicero, his fellow-countryman, was caught by Chaucer from Petrarch and Boccaccio. So medieval passed into modern literature. Other-worldliness yielded to the world we live in. The human comedy replaced the "divine comedy"—sung, when Petrarch was a boy, in the *Divina Commedia* of Dante, the Florentine, the greatest poet of the Christian Middle Ages.

The transition was not made without a struggle. It amounted to no less than a transition from one world to another, and the passage was bitterly opposed by the metaphysicians, allegorists and theologians of the older schools of thought, who defended the heritage of medievalism. Medieval metaphysicians resisted the inferences and conclusions of physical discovery—of the new astronomers, geographers, and explorers, whose symbol of reform was the sailing-ship, in which Columbus was to navigate the Atlantic. Medieval allegorists resisted the conclusions from the open eyes and clear-cut style of Latin and Greek writers, by whose teaching Petrarch introduced the New Learning into Italy, re-animating literature "by the old classical principle of the direct imitation of Nature". And medieval theologians resisted the tentative inferences and conclusions drawn by those who greatly dared to defy the prohibitions of the Catholic Church, and who, by reading the Bible in its original Hebrew and Greek texts, forced the road which Martin Luther was to follow into the Protestant Reformation. All this, and more, was wrapped up for the future enhancement of English literature in Chaucer's meeting with Petrarch at Florence in 1372 : an "exhilarating" experience, as it has been well called.[1]

France, too, was a little ahead of England in

[1] By Professor Ker, *Essays in Medieval Literature*, 69.

" poetry " and " merriment " : there was less fog across the Channel, and more sunshine in Provence than in England. France, too, like Italy, though at a greater distance from Rome, enjoyed descent from the Latin mother, and the *Romana lingua*, which was spoken by her peasantry and laymen, as distinct from the *Latina lingua* of the Church, was employed at an early date by the tellers and collectors of *romans*, or tales, in the vernacular tongue. These tales were " romantic " because they were told in lay speech—in the *romanice*, or romance-language, into which the more stately and formal Latin had unfolded on the French countryside ; and they became " romantic " in another sense, approximating to the modern meaning of the word, because the heroes of French *romans*, which were most commonly related in easily memorized slabs of verse, had been adventurous in their lifetime and had adventures thrust upon them after death. They passed into legend. The names of the hero, his lieutenants and descendants, attracted to his central story many local floating traditions, and his legendary exploits were then connected by slender links with his actual *gesta*, or deeds ; and these legendary tales in French " romantic " verse are still known as *chansons de geste*.[1]

There were three main heroes of the French *romans*, three main repertories for the *chansons de geste*. The first was Charlemagne (Carolus Magnus, Charles the Great), the historic Emperor of the Franks (*français*), whom Pope Leo III crowned at Rome in A.D. 800, who died in 814, after extending his Empire in arms and arts, and who became a legendary figure, with flowing beard and length of years, among a retinue of knights and paladins—the *parage*, or peerage, of Charlemagne, including Roland (Orlando)

[1] The industry of the *chansons de geste* occurred between 1050 and 1360. The chief authority is J. Bédier, *les Légendes épiques*.

of Roncesvalles—in the epic industry, or epopee, of succeeding centuries. The second was King Arthur, the historic leader of the natives of Western Britain in their struggle against invaders from Northern Germany in the second half of the fifth century A.D., who became the legendary hero of the epopee known as the Arthuriad, which attracted to itself the fables of Merlin the Magician, of the Knights of the Round Table, of the Holy Grail, etc. It was from "old French books" about King Arthur that Sir Thomas Malory, as noted above, constructed in 1469 his prose-romance, the *Morte Darthur*, reconstructed by Tennyson in the nineteenth century into the *Idylls of the King*. And the third main hero was Alexander the Great, King of Macedon in the fourth century B.C., whose wonderful career of conquest passed through French epopee in the Middle Ages into tales of exotic marvel in Palestine, India, Fairyland, and Paradise itself, and to whose *chansons* were added tales of Troy, Thebes, etc., reflected from Greek story through the mirror of medieval fabulists. Thus, Jean Bodel, a French *roman*-writer of the thirteenth century, could state with accuracy and point:

> Ne sont que trois matières à nul homme entendant,
> De France, et de Bretagne, et de Rome la grant.

There were three "matters" of epopee which were at every man's disposal—in which there was no copyright, in modern parlance: (1) The matter of "France", or Charlemagne; (2) the matter of "Bretagne", or Arthur; and (3) the matter of "Rome la grant", or all Antiquity.[1]

[1] The hero of the Spanish national "matter" was the Cid (Lord) of Valencia, Ruy Diaz de Bivar, who died in 1099. He passed into the legend of the *Poema del Cid* between 1140 and 1157: a very rapid process of chansonization. The *sagas* of Iceland (1100 and onwards) were more historical than legendary.

Before these "matters" could be transferred into readable or narrative *romans* (verse-tales), they had to pass through a process of composition. There were always thoughts, and always words, but there was not always style ; and this missing element of style, which assorted the words to the thoughts, was sought by writers in the daughter-languages of Italy and France from their study of writers in the old Latin mother-language. Italian modernists, as we saw, went to Cicero for help, and found in him the model which they wanted of lucidity, sincerity and eloquence. French romancers, confronted with a mass of floating, oral tradition, conveying tales of the exploits of Charlemagne, Arthur and Antique heroes, and seeking a model in style for transforming it into artistic *chansons*, went by the same Latin road to Ovid.

Publius Ovidius Naso was born in 43 B.C., the year in which Cicero died. He had sung in melodious verse the love-tales of Pagan gods and heroes, and had imposed on the caprices of Cupid's sport with men a code of chivalry and courtesy, which exactly suited the requirements of French camps and courts in the Middle Ages. Singers and minstrels in those ages ransacked current versions of Ovid's poems—his *Heroides*, *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti*, and *Ars Amatoria*—not only for the stories which he had to tell, but also for the way in which he told them : for the grace and lightness of his fancy, his masterly manipulation of the story-matter, his sensuousness bordering on lasciviousness, and his constant observance and enhancement of the rules of the great game which every pair of lovers played in May. Ovid's "sweet, witty soul", said an English critic, Francis Meres, writing in 1598, "lives again in honey-tongued Shakespeare." After Shakespeare, it lived again in William Morris and other writers, and before

Shakespeare it lived in Geoffrey Chaucer and in the books which Chaucer consulted, in his French studies and on his visits to France.

The chief of those books at his disposal was the famous *Roman de la Rose*, which was written by two French poets in the thirteenth century, and in which, as the earlier writer said, " all the Art of Love I close." We cannot pause at this *Romance of the Rose*, which served later romancers as a kind of stockpot, save to note that Chaucer himself translated a part of it into English verse, in the course of his apprenticeship to the poet's craft. As we did not pause at his debt to Italy, so we shall not specify the items of his debt to France. Each, in effect, was a debt to the Latin masters of the Italian and French writers, to the Latin style on which the daughter-tongues were sharpened. But we may make two quotations from Chaucer's works, thus calling the poet himself as a witness to his debt. In the " Prologue " to the Clerk's Tale in the *Canterbury Tales* we read :

> I wot you telle a tale which that I
> Lerned at *Padowe* [Padua] of a worthy clerk,
> As proved by his wordes and his werk . . .
> Fraunceys Petrark, the laureat poete,
> Highte this clerk, whos rhetoryke sweete
> Enlumined all Itaille of poetrye.

And, again, in verses 1147–8 of the same tale :

> Therefor Petrark wryteth
> This storie, which with heigh style he endyteth.

No quaintness of spelling or strangeness of words can conceal the simple confession that Chaucer went to Petrarch in this instance alike for his " tale " and for his " style ". He learned the tale at Padua out of Petrarch, whose sweet rhetoric was the light of Italy, and Petrarch had written it with high style. No less striking is our second instance. Chaucer

wrote, in five Books of seven-line stanzas, the tale of *Troilus and Criseyde*, which belonged to the Trojan section of the " matter " of Antiquity—the *matière de Rome la grant*, in old Bodel's classification. This was the poem which he dedicated to " moral Gower " and " philosophical Strode ",[1] and, while he owed, in his Trojan love-tale, a big debt to Boccaccio (in *il Filostrato*[2]) and to Boccaccio's sources in earlier *romans* of Troy, he set a course in romantic fiction which placed all later novelists in his debt. But our point is, the debt which he acknowledged to the story-writers of ancient Rome. " Go, little book," he said,

> And kiss the steps, wher-as thou seëst pace
> Virgil, Ovyde, Omer, Lucan, Stace.

Homer (Omer) was the shadow of a name : he was known only through Latin paraphrases ; but Virgil, Ovid, Lucan and Statius were Latin leaders of the romantic revival in the fourteenth century, and of these Ovid was the chief in love-lore. From these, and by the lights of France and Italy, Englishmen were learning to write English fiction ; and Chaucer's kisses waved at his Latin ladder were followed in the next stanza of the poem by the following frank acknowledgment :—

> And for there is so great diversity
> In English, and in writing of our tongue,
> So pray I God that none miswritë thee,
> Nor thee mis-metre for default of tongue ;
> And, read wher-so thou be, or elsë sung,
> That thou be understood I God beseech!

[1] John Gower (died 1408) wrote Latin, French, and English poems. Ralph Strode (died 1400) was a scholastic philosopher. Chaucer's epithets, " moral " and " philosophical ", may be taken to correspond to the old schools of theology and metaphysics, referred to above.

[2] Literally, fallen-in-love.

The apprenticeship of the English muse to foreign models, and the priority of Italy and France in the resources of language and metre, could not be more clearly stated by contemporary evidence. In the course of this sketch, we shall meet like conditions in England at later dates.

These resources were combined with others to modernize English poetry. It is a remarkable fact, which has to be seized at the outset of literary studies, that the modern note was sought with pains from ancient voices. Writers went back in order to go forward, and not every writer went back the whole way without assistance. Thus, Chaucer was a fair but by no means a profound Latin scholar : his Latin scholarship was not in the same street as Petrarch's ; and, like Petrarch, he had no access to Greek. He came to his Latin and Greek masters through the two French poets who wrote the *Roman de la Rose* (thirteenth century), through Guillaume de Machault (died 1377), and others, and through the great Italians, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. But this passage of medieval into modern literature led the moderns through the fairway of Antiquity. Between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, which is the name—sufficiently self-explanatory—given by historians and critics to the period which flowered in the sixteenth century, and decayed in the seventeenth, when modern times may be said to have begun, there was interposed the authority of the ancients : of the Latin rule first invoked by Petrarch, with Latin Cicero as the paragon of learning and Latin Ovid as the oracle of love. The change from medieval to modern literature was accomplished in every country in Europe, and in Italy and France first, by an appeal to and a renewal of the standards set in ancient Rome (" Rome la grant "), and this debt to Latinity is an essential element in literary history. The Latin

company which Chaucer kept through his French and Italian intimacies, in the early morning of England among the nations, determined the course of English literature; and the models which he rejected were no longer used for imitation.

One word only need be said here about those rejections. In the Prologue to the Parson's Tale in the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer declared:

> I am a Southern man,
> I cannot gestë *rum, ram, ruf,* by letter.

We have to note (1) that Chaucer, a Londoner, was a Knight of the shire of Kent, and, therefore, like his Parson, a Southern man; (2) that "gestë" means here, simply, write a tale; (3) that the South-eastern, or Southern, English dialect differed in Chaucer's day from the North-western, or Northern, in which the more rustic and native forms of alliterative verse were still composed; and (4) that "*raw, ram, ruf*, by letter" is an obvious synonym for alliteration. Chaucer meant by these verses that he could or would not tell tales in the old alliterative manner of the Northern singers. As mariners, extending the map, sailed westward-ho a few years later, so English poets, extending the resources of language and metre, turned the head of their Pegasus to the south. But they had to cast out the stones as they went along: and now we see more clearly why Chaucer prayed, in a passage cited above, that none, for lack of philology, might "mismetre" him. He *was* mismetred for several centuries. His metrical innovations were not fully understood till the advent of Thomas Tyrwhitt, whose critical edition of the *Canterbury Tales* was published in five volumes, 1775–8. This great scholar, says a scholar of our day, "is the restorer of Chaucer. There are few things in English philology more notable than Tyrwhitt's edition of Chaucer."[1]

[1] Professor Ker, *Cambridge History of English Literature*, x, 241.

So great a labour it was to lay the foundations of style in English poetry.

Among the "steps" mentioned above, by which Chaucer retraced the long road to antiquity, should be included the name of "Boece"—Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, sole Consul of Rome in A.D. 510, and the latest in time of Chaucer's Latin exemplars. He had combined philosophy with politics, to his undoing as a statesman, and was put to death in 524. In the eighth century he was venerated as a martyr, and his saint's-day, 23rd October, was formally recognized in 1883. He wrote in prison a Latin prose-poem on *The Consolation of Philosophy*, which consoled Sir Thomas More in prison in 1535, and which had become, in the intervening thousand years, a stock source-book for Europe's men of letters, including Chaucer in England. Its popularity, amounting to authority, was due to the ease of its style, to the interest of its subject, to the moral value of the lessons which it conveyed, and which raised the common experience of a fall from fortune to the height of opportunity for the display of a virtuous character. But it was due most of all to the philosopher-statesman's affinity with the great past Romans of his race, and to the discovery, at the edge of the Middle Ages, when mediæval thought was passing into modern, of a book interpreting that anxious modern mind (1) in the virtues to which it aspired, and (2) in the language which it cultivated. So, Boece was naturalized with Tully among the makers of the mind of Europe. He found translators in every modern language: in England, King Alfred, Chaucer himself, and, later, Queen Elizabeth; and one famous phrase of the Roman statesman may be pursued here through several modern versions to that of a poet in our own day. Boethius wrote:—

> In omni adversitate fortunæ infelicissimum est genus infortunii fuisse felicem.

Dante wrote (*Inferno*, v, 121–3 ; Longfellow's translation) :—

> There is no greater sorrow
> Than to be mindful of the happy time
> In misery.

Chaucer wrote (*Boece*, II, iv) :—

> In all adversity of fortune, the most unsely (unhappy) kind of contrarious fortune is to have been weleful (wealful).

And Tennyson wrote (*Locksley Hall*) :—

> This is truth the poet sings,
> That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Among other influences that made Chaucer must always be included the English Bible,[1] which was translated in this period by John Wiclif, a Reformer before the Reformation. Even more immediately of Chaucer's own generation was the poet who has become known as William Langland, and whose *Vision concerning Piers* (*Peter*) *the Plowman* was written between 1360 and 1380. Langland was a social reformer, a kind of Carlyle of the fourteenth century. Peter's dream, starting in the Malvern Hills, slid, as dreams are apt to do, into visions within visions, expounding the nature of virtue through the counsels of such guides as Dowel (do well), Dobet (do better), and Dobest. The Black Death and the French wars, the glittering side of which was displayed in the French chronicles of Jean Froissart (died 1400), and the seamy side of which was revealed when the demobilized soldiery came home, gave the gaunt and grave Worcestershire poet, who was an occasional visitor to London, material enough for reflection ; and this aspect of an awakening national consciousness, stimulated by fresh study of the Bible

[1] See Chapter IV, below.

and of moral ideas, must not be omitted from the preparation of Chaucer.

So we come to the man himself, as he was made by England, his mother. Her courage strengthened him ; her land-winds and sea-winds blew upon him, with their scents and their salt. As is mostly the Englishman's way, the profundities of experience passed Chaucer by. He was an Englishman in the line of ascent to Shakespeare, Fielding, and Dickens. Each of these was partly made out of his temporary social environment : Shakespeare, by Elizabethan curiosity ; Fielding, by Georgian realism ; Dickens, by Victorian sentiment ; and Chaucer, by the rising Humanism of his times. But all four, and Chaucer first, loved their country before they improved it, and far more than they reproved it. It was the common people's joyful life in England, which Chaucer, using the resources which he gathered busily and with open eyes, depicted in his *Canterbury Tales*, the best and most original of his writings. These consist of a series of stories, grave and gay, told successively, in a kind of rough alternation of subjects, by a company of pilgrims from the Tabard Inn, Southwark, to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket, at Canterbury. The date of the start has been conjectured as 16th April, 1387, and the cavalcade was composed of persons drawn from all ranks of life, each of whom was to have told four tales, two going and two returning. This programme was modified to one apiece, but not even that allowance was reached. There are more pilgrims than stories. Still, these run to 17,000 verses, with, additionally, two tales in prose—God's plenty, as John Dryden devoutly said. For metre, Chaucer chose the heroic-couplet, which, with rhyme-royal,[1] the metre of his *Troilus*, he adapted from

[1] For the heroic-couplet, see Appendix I. Rhyme-royal, consisting of a stanza of seven verses, each of ten syllables, rhyming *a b a bb cc*,

foreign models, and moulded to national possessions, as Petrarch moulded the sonnet in Italy.

The rest is merely a matter of reading Chaucer, not for the sake of evidence to his poetic origin and descent, but for the sake of enjoying his poetry. The Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* will tempt us to further exploration of

> Th' estate, th' array, the number, and eke the cause
> Why that assembled was this company
> In Southwark, at this gentil hostelry,
> That hight the Tabard.

We shall be attracted to Chaucer at the start by his appeal to our courtesy, to forgive him his plain speaking:

> Christ spake himself full broad in Holy Writ,
> And well ye wot, no villainy is it.
> Eke Plato saith, whoso that can him read,
> 'The wordës moote be cousin to the deed' [1];

and to forgive him, too, for his democratic neglect of precedence:

> All have I not set folk in their degree
> Here in this tale, as that they shouldë stand;
> My wit is short, ye may well understand.

We shall meet the merchant, with his forked beard, sitting high on his horse, and wearing a Fleming beaver hat; the learned clerk of Oxford, who would rather have twenty books of Aristotle at his bed's head than rich robes and a fiddle; the shipman, whom none could beat, from Hull to Carthage,

was a variant of the octavè stanza (*ottava rima*), which Boccaccio had founded on the intricate metrical experiments of older poets in Sicily and Provence. Spenser's stanza was a later English variant. Blank verse for narrative purposes crossed to England in the sixteenth century.

[1] Moote = must. Chaucer found his saying of Plato in Boethius.

in seacraft and knowledge of the tides ; the physician, who knew the cause of every malady, but knew best that

> Gold in physic is a cordial,
> Therefore he lovèd gold in special ;

and the rest ; and we, who have seen Territorial Armies cross the Channel to battle in French fields, shall recognize their prototypes in the fourteenth century in Chaucer's " verray parfit gentil knight ", and in his son, the young squire and lover, who

> had been sometime in chivalchy [1]
> In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardy . . .
> Singing he was, or fluting, all the day;
> He was as fresh as is the month of May.

And, appropriately, it was a Frenchman, Professor Legouis, who discovered in this last verse the best description of Chaucer himself, with his clean breath washed of obstructions by the sweet showers of England in April (" Prologue," 1).[2]

[1] Military expedition.

[2] Robert Browning's

> Oh, to be in England
> Now that April's there,

goes right back, of course, to Chaucer's Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*.

CHAPTER II

Spenser

THE April inaugurated by Chaucer was, as April so often is in England, the herald of frost as well as sunshine. A barren age succeeded the first harvest. Chaucer himself, as noted by Milton,[1] left some of his tales half-told ; his translation of the *Romance of the Rose* stopped short at verse 1,705 out of more than 22,000 verses ; the *House of Fame* and *Legend of Fair Women* were unfinished ; and it is a likely conjecture that his *Troilus and Criseyde* was the torso of a bigger design for a romance of the Trojan War, which formed a section of the French *chansons de geste*, and which had acquired, as we saw, particular English interest from the legend of the descent of British kings from an imaginary Brut, or Brutus, a scion of Aeneas of Troy.

Like Chaucer, his King, Edward III, also left his work uncompleted. The partial frost which descended on English literature after the death of Chaucer coincided with, and may be said to have been caused by, the temporary removal of England from the place which Edward III had sought in the sun. Opinions may differ as to the character and capacity of that monarch, but no one disputes his title to what we now call imperialism. Partly by foresight, partly, perhaps, by the force of circumstances set in motion by himself, and aided, doubtless, by the accident of a continuous

[1] . . . him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold . . .
Milton : *Il Penseroso*, referring to the unfinished " Squire's Tale ".

reign, Edward III brought his country perceptibly nearer to the central movements of his age. For a century or more after his death, England "counted" much less in the development of Europe. Thus, in the significant field of water-traffic, it was not till seventy years after the King's death in 1377 that English navigation reached the Baltic; it was not till half a century later still that it reached the Mediterranean.[1] It was not till the reign of Henry VII that England began to conclude commercial treaties with foreign powers—with Denmark in 1490, and with Flanders in 1496—showing that English merchants were at last sailing their own vessels instead of depending on the visits of the Venetian, Hanseatic, and other fleets. And it was not till about this date, or even a few years later, that the ideas sown by Chaucer began to bear fruit on English soil, that names equal to his were added to the roll of English literature, and that May flowers followed the showers of April.

What did happen during that century? In England, there were eight kings between the accession of Richard II in 1377 and of Henry VII in 1485: and eight kings in 108 years—an average reign of $13\frac{1}{2}$ years—affords a strong presumption of violent happenings.[2] Take the evidence of their fate: deposition, war, madness, defeat, murder, bloodshed,

[1] "In the school of Karl Ritter [a German geographer, 1779–1859] much has been said of three stages of civilization determined by geographical conditions: the *potamic*, which clings to rivers, the *thalassic*, which grows up around inland seas, and lastly the *oceanic*." Seeley, *Expansion of England*, v. England entered late into the oceanic stage. "In the Middle Ages England was, from the point of view of business, not an advanced, but on the whole a backward country. She must have been despised in the chief commercial countries." Ibid.

[2] Henry VII, Henry VIII, and Queen Elizabeth reigned for 107 out of the 118 years between 1485 and 1603.

oppression. It may be read in any history book ; or it may be read, by Shakespeare's imagination, in the drama of *Richard II*,

> How some have been deposed ; some slain in war ;
> Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed ;
> Some poison'd by their wives ; some sleeping kill'd ;
> All murder'd ;

and contrast that experience with the record of the prolonged reign of Edward III, who just missed the jubilee of his accession, and who, whatever his mistakes and faults, was at least a big man in a big time, with space to work out a consistent policy.

And what was happening abroad, while England was being driven out of France, and the Wars of the Roses were engaged, and while the uncertainty of politics nipped the promise of England's literary spring ? Italy maintained and extended the lead in Latin and Greek studies which Petrarch had given to Boccaccio in Florence. Under Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464) and his grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent (1448–92),[1] libraries and academies were founded, pageants and plays were performed, the Florentine Court became the centre of Renaissance scholarship, and the native Italian tongue was firmly moulded to literary use. Modern literature in Europe, as it was reformed out of the broken dreams of Petrarch, owed its new birth to Lorenzo, and to the brilliant circle which he attracted to Florence of poets, critics, *savants*, painters, sculptors, artificers, secretaries, and teachers from the East. Columbus, Vasco de Gama, Amerigo Vespucci (whose name was given to America), and Sebastian Cabot—navigators from Genoa, Portugal, Spain, and Venice—were all born between 1445 and 1475, and there was no Englishman

[1] *Life*, by William Roscoe, 1795 ; 10th edition, revised by Thomas Roscoe, 1862.

to set beside them. To the same generation belonged Erasmus, the Dutch reformer-scholar ; Copernicus, the German astronomer ; and Michael-Angelo, the Italian painter : three incomparable names. The printer's craft rose in Germany in the fifteenth century, "bringing out from the darkness that ransomed captive, the human mind," [1] and crowning Venice with the fame of Aldus Manutius (1449–1515). The Aldine Classics included the first issues of ninety-six works by twenty-seven Greek writers ; and though William Caxton (1422–91) brought the craft to England in 1476, and set up a press in Westminster, yet "in a literary history it should be observed that the Caxton publications are more adapted to the general than the learned reader, and indicate but a low state of learning in England ".[2] So we record, in a literary history, that England to that extent was left behind, during a part at least of those 108 years, when the princes of Lancaster and York were fighting for the Crown, and royal uncles and nephews made England the cockpit of their rivalries.

The accession of Henry VII in 1485 may be taken as the beginning of a new era. The Englishman of the Tudor dynasty woke up to a new world. He had peace abroad, and comparative prosperity at home. The social unrest, aggravated by foreign and civil wars, was beginning to settle down. The power of the nobles was giving way to the nobler and stronger power of the merchants and middle class, whom Chaucer had elevated to poetic rank in 1387. And it was a new world in a wider sense. The marvels of the stellar universe, the secrets of the unplumbed ocean, the icebergs of Labrador, the sea-route to India—new lands, new peoples, new ideas, had been added to the experience of English

[1] Victor Hugo. [2] Hallam, *Literature of Europe*, I, iii, 51.

pilgrims, whose earlier range of adventure had been sought between Southwark and Canterbury. In another aspect, it was an old world renewed. The grammarians, even the pedants, had done their work. Learning, as Roscoe quaintly says in his Life of *Lorenzo de' Medici*, "was emerging from its state of reptile torpor." Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, Virgil, Cicero, Sallust, and the rest of the great company of Greece and Rome, emerged from the night of the Middle Ages into a brightness unknown even to their contemporaries. They were multiplied, distributed, translated, absorbed, and at last they crossed to England in full panoply. But their arrival was late. To Caxton in England in the fifteenth century even Virgil was an unfamiliar name. There is a sense of discovery in Caxton's reference to "a little book in French, which late was translated out of Latin by some noble clerk of France, which book is named *Eneidos* (made in Latin by that noble poet and great clerk, Virgil)"; and this sense of novelty is not diminished by his further reference to the "fair and honest terms and words in French", the like of which he had never seen before, "nor none so pleasant and so well ordered," and to the fact, which, we gather, would be new to Caxton's readers, that "for many hundred years past was the said book of *Eneidos*, with other books, made and learned daily in schools, especially in Italy and other places, which history the said Virgil made in metre".

France and Italy, then, had shown the way to Caxton, as they had shown it to Chaucer before him; and the first thing for English men of letters to do, now that the close of the war with France permitted them to talk French again,[1] was to supplement the

[1] See Shakespeare's *King Henry V*, Act IV, Scene 4, and Act V, Scene 2, for amusing representations of the unfrenchified Englishman. The German language was similarly *tabu* in England, 1914–19.

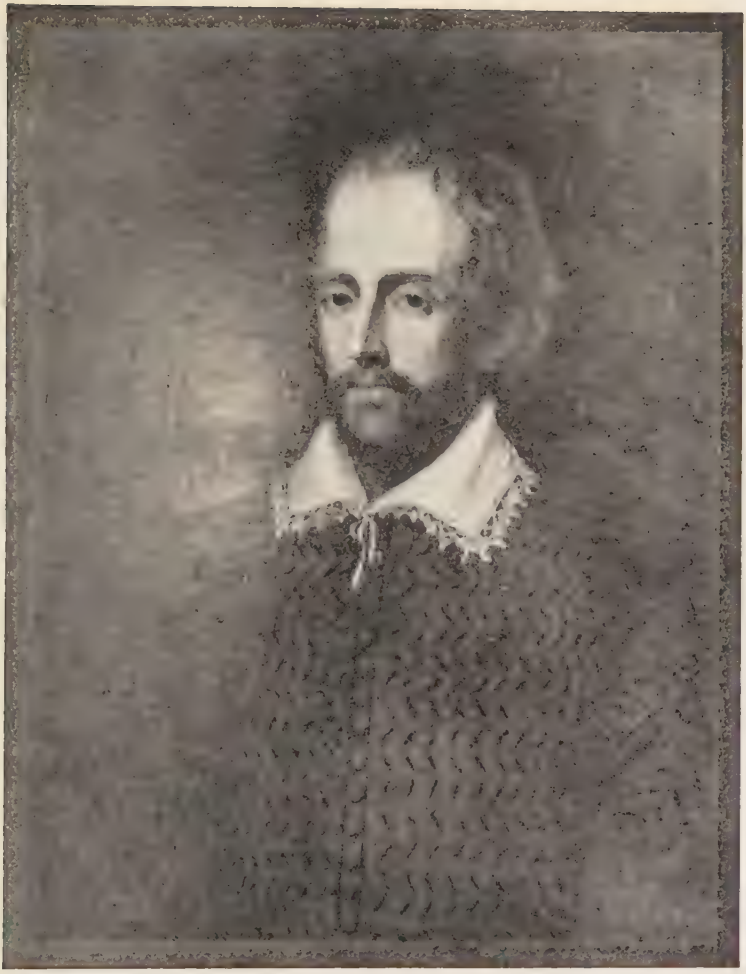
English language by French constructions, and to try to render it, like French, uniform, "pleasant" and "well-ordered". Caxton, to quote him once more, in his Preface to Malory's *Morte Darthur*, referred to the copy delivered to him, which "Sir Thomas Malory did take out of certain books of French, and reduced it into English", and observed further that King Arthur was "more spoken of beyond the sea, and more books made of his noble acts than there be in England". So that even for native legendary lore—the *matière de Bretagne*, in old Bodel's classification—English writers and printers had to go abroad. In this, as in other forms of literature, they had to improve their style and language by foreign models.

Treatises on style, indeed, or on rhetoric, or eloquence, or language, had been a common product of the daughter-nations of the Latin mother, a common concomitant of their growing literatures, since the beginning of modern times. Even Dante, who died in 1321, and whose whole heart and being was in the Catholic Middle Ages, composed a Latin treatise of great value on "The Vulgar Tongue" (*de Vulgari Eloquio*), which was designed to win for his native Tuscan the forms and dignity of classical diction—to render it equally illustrious, in his own epithet; and Italian scholars in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries sowed the furrows which Dante had turned up. The modern languages were drilled by the ancient, commencing with Italian by Latin, and, as each modern language acquired a semblance of ancient discipline and order, it became a drilling language in its turn: it put up its sergeant's stripes, in military terms. So we reach presently the curious result, which can best be illustrated out of English, one of the last of the literary master-languages, that the secondary writers in the newly disciplined

European tongues were ranged and equated as models with the primary writers in the classical tongues : the N.C.O.'s entered commissioned ranks. Take, for instance, in 1589, Edmund Spenser's Preface to his *Faery Queen*, in the form of a letter to Sir Walter Ralegh. The *Faery Queen*, which, after the *Canterbury Tales*, was the second great poem in the English language, though two hundred years later than the first, was founded on the same Arthur-legend, which Malory had rendered out of French books for Caxton's press at Westminster in 1485; and this is how Spenser explained his choice and method to his readers :—

> I chose the history of King Arthur, as most fit for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many men's former works, and also furthest from the danger of envy, and suspicion of present time. In which I have followed all the ancient poets historical: first, Homer, who, in the persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses, hath ensampled a good governor and a virtuous man, the one in his *Iliad*, the other in his *Odyssey* ; then Virgil, whose like intention was to do in the person of Aeneas ; after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando ; and lately Tasso dissevered them again, and formed both parts in two persons, namely that part which they in philosophy call *Ethice*, or virtues of a private man, coloured in his Rinaldo ; the other, named *Politice*, in his Godfredo. By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to pourtray in Arthur . . . the image of a brave knight.

There is much that is arresting in this passage, and to some aspects of it we shall come back ; but our immediate point is, the ranging of Ariosto, who had died as recently as 1533, and Tasso, who was still alive, as equal authorities with Homer and Virgil for an Englishman writing epic poetry in the year 1589. The secondary Continental models were equated with their own models in antiquity.



SPENSER

Our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas—MILTON

[*face p. 30*

One more example, out of many, may be submitted, since it is also connected with Edmund Spenser. Sir Philip Sidney, himself a very perfect knight, died in 1586, and shortly before his death he wrote an *Apologie for English Poetry*, which was first published in 1595. Similar critical discourses had been written assiduously on the Continent by the busy drill-sergeants, as we have described them, who were applying classical discipline to modern literatures, and we need not dwell upon them here. What we may dwell upon, however, is, first, Sidney's praise of Chaucer, which helps to show how sound a judge he was :

> Chaucer undoubtedly did excellently in his *Troilus and Cressid* ; of whom truly I know not whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty[1] time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumblingly after him ;

and, secondly, Sidney's criticism of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, in twelve eclogues (pastoral poems), 1579 :

> The *Sheapheard's Kalendar* has much Poetry in its Eclogues : Indeed worthy the reading if I be not deceived. That same framing of its style to an old rustic language I dare not allow, since neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sanazar in Italian, did affect it.

There are two points here to be observed, each of vital interest and importance in our present context : (1) that a contemporary critic of Edmund Spenser judged the success of his English style by the degree of its conformity with classical standards, and (2) that those classical standards included not only Greek and Latin, but also Italian. The Greek Idyls of Theocritus, who died in the second century B.C., have been a potent influence on modern poetry right down to Tennyson and Matthew Arnold, and the Latin

[1] He " raised poetry under our fogs ". See p. 10 above.

Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil have likewise taken deep root. But who is "Sanazar" in this *galère*, that he should be equated by Sidney with the other two, as Tasso, a living poet, was equated by Spenser with Virgil and Homer? As a fact, he was Jacopo Sannazzaro, of Naples, who had died in 1530, and whose prose-poem, the *Arcadia*, 1504, passed through fifty-nine editions in Italy before the end of the sixteenth century, and was translated and imitated outside; among others, by Sidney himself in a pastoral romance, *Arcadia*, first published in 1590. Thus, Sannazzaro forged a link between ancient and modern pastoral literature, and Sidney, at Spenser's end of the chain, assessed each link at equal value.

But Edmund Spenser judged more wisely, as he is held in wider honour as a man of letters, than Philip Sidney. Whether or not Spenser framed his pastoral style to an old rustic language is not of present significance. It might be shown that he did not. But plainly in Sidney's judgment he did so, and it is the contemporary judgment which matters. Plainly, by this evidence, there was a difference between Sidney's and Spenser's view of the degree of conformity required by the authority of the ancients. Both concurred in their surrender to the ancients' rule, but it seems a fair inference from Sidney's words that Spenser did not follow Sidney all the way in his dependence on the classical resources at his disposal—*classical* including the new secondary classics of Italy. Spenser was no mere imitator of acknowledged models, but he aimed at moving freely in their likeness.

Further evidence, both negative and positive, may be brought to bear on this conclusion. The negative evidence comes from Sidney, and the positive from Spenser. Negatively, Sir Philip Sidney sought to confine the reform of English metre and diction within strict limits of classico-Italian examples. His

reference to Sannazzaro is characteristic. What the Italian disciples of classical masters permitted, ranked as equally classical in his eyes : to the extent of that consecrated terrain English poets and prose-writers might expatiate—to that extent, and no further. Sidney was not the chief arbiter in these matters. He was too big and too busy a man to concern himself exclusively with the details of foreign rules of metre and diction. Behind Sidney was his mentor, Gabriel Harvey (died 1630), a somewhat pedantic classical purist, who led a little côterie of taste in a club which met at Leicester House and which was known as the Areopagus. What the Areopagites said was *it*, and Harvey's Latin treatises on rhetoric (published 1577) laid down the law of Parnassus according to the foot-rule of the Areopagus. That rule was inelastic. Harvey forgot, or he never knew, that the true value of Greek and Latin (and Italian) studies is to liberate, not to bind, the mind and pen ; and, despite his precepts and example, with its direct influence on Sir Philip Sidney and its less successful attempts to govern Spenser, he failed to stem the flowing tide of the English Renaissance. He failed to impose the Latin hexameter as a national English metre ; he failed to abolish rhyme as an ornament of modern lyric verse ; and he failed more generally in his campaign to make England a mere literary province of Italy.

The positive evidence from Spenser shows him at once anxious and respectful in his disagreement, even his partial revolt, from the standards of the Areopagus. Since Sir Philip Sidney was identified with that club, we should make it clear at once that Spenser's tentative questionings of the standards of the Areopagus did not touch his deference to Sir Philip Sidney, who was a much greater man than Harvey, his literary mentor, and even than his own writings.

It was Sidney's life, not his style, which is the man. His short, brilliant, heroic record supplied poets with a living pattern of that idea of courtesy—of the ideal man of that Renaissance, as distinct from the ideal man of the Catholic and feudal Middle Ages—which it was their common ambition to portray. He was nobleman, scholar, soldier, lover, traveller, diplomat ; he satisfied in a supreme degree the exacting conditions of gentlehood, laid down by Baldassaro Castiglione, the door-keeper of the Italian Renaissance, in his famous treatise on " The Courtier " (*il Cortegiano*, Venice, 1528), which had been translated into almost every language, and into English by Sir Thomas Hoby, 1561. The profound influence of this picture of the ideal scholar-gentleman has not been exhausted in four hundred years,[1] and it inspired the life, and soldier's death, of Sir Philip Sidney, who represented at the Court of Queen Elizabeth the " gentleman or noble person, fashioned in virtuous and gentle discipline ", which was Spenser's express aim through the portrait of King Arthur in the *Faery Queen*. Sir Philip Sidney—England's *cortegiano*—was the intimate friend of statesmen, artists, and rulers : of Hubert Languet (1518–81), French Huguenot and humanist ; Tintoretto (1518–94) and Veronese (1528–88), Italian painters ; and Prince William of Orange (1533–84), among others. Great writers sought the privilege of dedicating to him their books, and he wrote, as we have noted, books of his own : the *Apologie for Poetry*, the Arcadian romance, and love-sonnets to " Stella ", who was the Lady Penelope,

[1] " Our proudest title is not that we are the contemporaries of Darwin, but that we are the descendants of Shakespeare ; we too are men of the Renaissance, inheritors of that large and noble conception of humanity and art to which a monument is erected in this *Book of the Courtier*." From *Some Authors* (Oxford, 1923) by Sir Walter Raleigh (1861–1922).

daughter of the first Earl of Essex, and wife, successively, to the third Baron Rich and third Earl of Devonshire. What wonder that Edmund Spenser, seeking patronage and approval, should turn to that bright spirit of the Areopagus, whose paramount example of Renaissance ideals struck contemporaries with amazement, and intensified sorrow at his early death? So, Spenser, too, talked with Areopagites in the gate; he even made some experiments in their metres, and, by the pen of E.K. (Edward Kirke), he inscribed his *Shepherd's Calendar*, 1579, "to the most excellent and learned, both Orator and Poet, Master Gabriel Harvey," from whom he implored "patronage of the new poet".

But the "new poet", however deferential to the brilliant example of Sir Philip Sidney, was not satisfied with reflected light. He saw further, and built higher, than Gabriel Harvey; and E.K., expressing Spenser's sentiments, states clearly in this dedicatory epistle that the author of the *Shepherd's Calendar* "hath laboured to restore, as to their rightful heritage, such good and natural (i.e. native) English words, as have been long time out of use, and almost clean disinherited". Spenser's breed of Englishmen, however deeply sensible of the literary lessons to be learned abroad, should, at home, in his writings, talk English, "which truly of itself is both full enough for prose and stately enough for verse," though it "hath long time been counted most bare and barren of both". Its barren reputation was to be ended. Long enough had English writers consented to patch up the holes in their mother-tongue "with pieces and rags of other languages, borrowing here of the French, there of the Italian, everywhere of the Latin; not weighing how ill those tongues accord with themselves, but much worse with ours. So now they have made our English tongue a gallimaufrey, or hodgepodge, of

all other speeches . . . whose first shame is, that they are not ashamed, in their own mother-tongue, to be counted strangers and aliens". So said Spenser, Sidney's votary, but never fully Harvey's disciple ; and it was surely a brave and an imperial pronouncement, the courage and vision of which are the more remarkable when we remember that they were displayed, not in the full tide of the Tudor Renaissance, but a few years earlier than the Armada (1588), and while Richard Hakluyt (died 1616) was still compiling his prose-treasury of England's Odyssey at sea.[1] Thus, Spenser, born at the end of a barren age, the political causes of which we have tried to note, aimed beyond the reach of the *literati* of the Areopagus ; and, fashioning the type of an English gentleman after the master-pattern of Castiglione, he would first supply an English language for him to speak : "as young birds" (we are still quoting E.K.'s Preface), "that be newly crept out of the nest, by little first to prove their tender wings, before they make a greater flight." First, then, Spenser's experiment in pastoral poetry ; and, next, his epical flight in the Arthur-romance of the good governor : first *pascua*, then *duces*. And the language was not to be a hotch-potch, all patched and matched with foreign pieces, but an illustrious native tongue, such as Dante and his successors had created for Italy out of Latin, transforming the elements which it adopted, and capable of carrying the splendour of Elizabeth's Court, in the meridian of England's social and religious history. At a time when Queen Elizabeth was gathering the latent genius of her country to a large and authentic expression, Spenser, exalting her as Gloriana, filled the function of the "new poet", of the poet making the future of English poetry, the poets' poet,

[1] *Principal Navigations, etc., of the English Nation*, 3 vols., 1598–1600.

as Charles Lamb was to teach us to call him, who sought to create the poetic utterance of his country's lips.[1]

Through the linguistic and metrical reforms, which he learned on the slopes of the Areopagus, Spenser aimed, in his "greater flight", at a moral reformation: through philology at ethics. The new poetry was the key to a new morality, a new conduct of life in a new time. We recall the general aim of the *Faery Queen*, "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline." "To some, I know," continues the poet, in his prefatory letter to Sir Walter Ralegh, "this method will seem displeasant, which would rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they use, than thus cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devices." But Xenophon's allegory of government (*Cyropædia*) is more understandable, Spenser remarked, than Plato's precepts of the State (*Republic*): "so much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample than by rule." Discipline by example, accordingly, was the aim and object of the *Faery Queen*, and Spenser's apprenticeship to the muse was a means to this high moral end. Like Chaucer, he translated from the French, but, more fortunate than Chaucer, he had learned to study his mother-tongue at school, where he came under the humane influence of Richard Mulcaster, head master of Merchant Taylor's from 1561–86. He went

[1] The story is written in all the history books. Particular reference may be made to the valuable generalizations by Sir J. R. Seeley in his *Growth of British Policy*, and to chapters viii–xi of volume iii of the *Cambridge Modern History*, from which we may quote: "The whole nation was now moved with an impulse of defiant resolve," *now* being 1584; and: "she knew her people well, and was proud of being altogether one of them—in her own phrase 'mere English'"; and, again: "The English of Elizabeth's reign had, suddenly, as it seemed, developed a new and aggressive maritime energy."

slow, in order to go far. As he wrote in his introductory stanzas to the *Faery Queen*, he trained himself to wait for the fit time to change his oaten reeds for trumpets stern, and, thus devoted to his calling, he was ready for the poetic occasion, when

" Fierce wars and faithful loves shall moralize my song ".

Spenser derived his zeal for the English language, as a means to English consciousness, from the contagion of Mulcaster's lessons, from his own reading and observation, from the prior experiments and achievements in poetic style, founded on foreign models, by Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503–42) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516–47),[1] from reflection on Harvey's excessive purism, and, pre-eminently, since England still depended on foreign practice,

[1] " In the latter end of King Henry the Eighth's reign sprang up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder and Harry Earl of Surrey were the two chieftains, who, having tasted the sweet and stately measures and style of the Italian Poesy, as novices newly crept out of the schools of Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely manner of vulgar Poesy, from what it had been before, and for that cause may justly be said the first reformers of our English metre and style." [R.] Puttenham, *Art of English Poetry*, 1589.

Noting that maker=poet, there is nothing to add to this nearly contemporary record of the novitiate of England's Italian period under Wyatt and Surrey. Surrey chiefly introduced the form of the Sonnet, seeking his patterns from French variants of Italian models (Marot and Saint-Gelais, after Petrarch, Sannazzaro and others); he also borrowed from Italy the device of narrative blank verse. Wyatt, too, was a sonneteer, and his musical gifts stood him in good stead in lyrical metres such as the *rondeau*. Surrey wrote of Wyatt in an elegy:

> A tongue that served in foreign realms his king,
> Whose courteous talk to virtue did inflame
> Each noble heart: a worthy guide to bring
> Our English youth by travail into fame—

and so, like his elegist, a forerunner of Spenser in his ambition to fashion a gentleman in the discipline of the *cortegiano*.

from direct study of a recent French solution of the same linguistic problem. This was contained in the forty-eight pages of a *Défense et Illustration de la Langue française*, published in 1549 by Joachim du Bellay, one of seven stars in the cluster of the Pleiad, of which Pierre de Ronsard (1524–85), prince of poets, was the central and most brilliant light. We must not dwell on the sudden splendour of this constellation, or on its abiding influence, which, though curtailed in France in the seventeenth century by the purists who led the way to the French Academy (1634), is crucial in the literature of Europe. As it took its light from other countries—Italy and Spain, as well as ancient Greece and Rome—so it spread its beams to countries yet in darkness ; and, if it was a Frenchman who declared that du Bellay's *Défense*, the critical manifesto of the Brotherhood, was couched " in the tone of the Commandments ", it was an Englishman who wrote that " Shakespeare practised what du Bellay preached ".[1] The rise of the Pleiad belongs to the separate history of French literature, but the application of its precepts forms a chapter of English literary history, and towards the extraction of that practice from those precepts Spenser contributed most.

Among the verse-forms which du Bellay and the Pleiad aimed at naturalizing was the " long poem " of the epic tradition, and Spenser's " ensamples " of epos were derived, by the same token, from the four " excellent poets " whom he named in his letter to Sir Walter Ralegh : Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso ; and, particularly, from the third in this quartet. Ludovico Ariosto of Ferrara (1474–1533)

[1] The Frenchman is Jusserand, *Ronsard*, p. 36 ; the Englishman is Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*, ii, 115. The Seven Stars of the Pleiad, a name transferred from an old group of Greek poets of Alexandria, were Ronsard, du Bellay, Belleau, Baif, Jodelle, Tyard, and Dorat.

had written, between 1505–15, a modern epic founded on the legend, in the *matière de France*, of Roland, the paladin of Charlemagne. It was entitled *Orlando Furioso* (mad), and, while it followed the precedents of ancient models of epic verse, Ariosto impelled his native language to rise to the height of that class of writing. He poured the liquid music of his words through the slow, rich stanzas of eight eleven-syllabled lines, which, under the name of *ottava-rima*, had become a national metre of Italy. Boccaccio, as we saw,[1] had framed it out of the metrical experiments of Provence and Sicily, and it had been improved by practice between Boccaccio and Ariosto. Its rhyme-scheme was *ab ab ab cc* ; Chaucer's rhyme-royal (seven verses of ten syllables, *ab ab b cc*) and Spenser's nine-line stanza (eight verses of ten syllables, closed by one verse of twelve, rhyming *ab abbc bcc*) were variants of *ottava-rima*, which attained its greatest triumph in the *Orlando Furioso*. For the sake of these external graces, Hallam described the *Orlando* as "very rarely surpassed", and placed Ariosto fourth in succession to Homer, Virgil, and Dante, for "purity of taste, grace of language, and harmony of versification"[2] ; and, after all, the first thing Spenser wanted, in the "barren" England of his day, was to improve his native language, as the poets of the Pleiad had improved theirs in France, into a vehicle of poetry, in its most exacting kind, as pure in taste, as graceful in diction, and as harmonious in versification, as the best extant modern examples, down to Torquato Tasso[3] in his own day.

But to learn from Frenchmen how to emulate Italians, even from Ronsard and du Bellay how to emulate Ariosto and Tasso, was not enough for an English poet in the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth. Spenser aimed at Ariosto's excellence, but he aimed

[1] p. 21, n. 1. [2] *Literature of Europe*. [3] See Appendix II.

beyond it too. As he wrote in a letter to Gabriel Harvey, he wanted to " overgo " Ariosto ; to overgo him, not in those qualities in which, by Hallam's evidence, the Italian poet had been " very rarely surpassed ", but in a direction hardly or not at all explored by the poets of the Renaissance in Italy. " Fierce wars and faithful loves shall moralize my song," wrote Spenser. Of war and love, and ferocity and faith, there had been plenty in his epical exemplars, Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, Tasso ; but the Italians, at any rate, ranked as equal or greater classics of the epic muse, had been content to tell their tales without a moral, and the added, extra *moral* purpose was Spenser's bounty to his countrymen.

Or was it the bounty of his countrymen to Spenser ? We must not be too precise about what he gave and what he took. But the questions are more identic than they seem, and they will repay a brief examination. First, we should note, however, that Spenser generously assumed, and perhaps genuinely believed, that his moral aim had been shared by his " ensamples ". In that prefatory letter to Sir Walter Ralegh, he said that Homer had " ensampled a good governour and a vertuous man " in Agamemnon and Ulysses respectively, that Virgil had cherished a " like intention in the person of Aeneas ", and " after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando ". It may be ; but, omitting Homer and Virgil, Ariosto would have been surprised to learn that his *Orlando Furioso* supplied any " ensample " of this pattern. Certainly, that object was not included in Ariosto's specification of his epic :

> Of Dames, of Knights, of arms, of love's delight,
> Of courtesies, of high attempts, I speak,

though Spenser was to include moralizing in his specification of the *Faery Queen*. Unlike Spenser,

again, Ariosto was not much disturbed by the faction and fighting of his day : let the French King threaten Italian towers with all the engines of war, he wrote, in a Latin poem in 1496 : " no care touches me, lying under my arbutus-tree beside the sound of running water." Nor, again, to employ another test, did Ariosto's employer at Ferrara seek practical counsel in affairs of State from the adventures of *Orlando*, as Queen Elizabeth was intended to seek it from the allegory of the *Faery Queen*.[1] Perhaps the cardinal was impercipient, perhaps the poet was obstinate, but " Where did you discover such a farrago of nonsense ? " was all that Ippolito d'Este could find to say to Ariosto ; and a modern critic speaks of the poet's progress through " the magic and marvels of romance, the restless movements of knight-errantry, the love of peril and adventure for their own sake, the insane appetite for combat, the unpractical virtues no less than the capricious wilfulness of Paladins and Saracens ".[2] No, Ariosto himself was innocent of the moral allegory which Sir John Harington, his English translator, would have read into the poem, and which Spenser would have extracted from it. Art, not morality, set the standard of Ariosto's romance of Roland mad :

> Between Orlando and Rinaldo late
> There fell about Angelica some brawl,
> And each of them began the tother hate,
> This lady's love had made them both so thrall.
> But Charles, who much dislikes that such debate
> Between such friends should rise, on cause so small,
> To Namus of Buvier in keeping gave her,
> And suffered neither of them both to have her.

[1] And as Queen Victoria was intended to seek it from Tennyson's later allegory of King Arthur, " new-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul."

[2] J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*.

But promised he would presently bestow
The damsel fair on him that, in that fight,
The plainest proof of his prowess show,
And danger most the Pagans with his might.

This was all that Ariosto undertook to sing ; and because he sang it with such surpassing skill, his rare gifts of external grace moved English Italianate poets to confuse that grace with their virtue ; and even threatened to retard, by the too slavish discipleship of the Areopagites, the original springs of the native genius of English poetry.[1]

The fact is, that the spirit of the Renaissance, in the time of Elizabeth, as in the time of Edward III, met a more positive temperament when it reached the peoples of the north. It changed its character with its climate. Between the Renaissance and the Reformation, between the makers of the one and the other, lay the difference, say, of Raphael, the painter, from Luther, the prophet—the twins of 1483. Eager young missionaries of culture brought the Italian Renaissance across the Alps, to France, Germany, Holland, England, in the fifteenth century. But once at home again, and applying the new method to concrete problems of Church and State, the young doctors, at Wittenberg and elsewhere, sought more real and tangible results. Some, like Wolsey in the play, in a scene [2] to which we shall come back, ventured in a sea of glory, but far beyond their depth. Luther himself, quitting Wittenberg, and demanding freedom of thought at the very throne of the Holy

[1] "At no period in its history did our poetry pass through so perilous a crisis. For some time it seemed not unlikely that the Renaissance would cast the same spell on English genius as it had cast on the genius of Italy and France . . . Fortunately, however, the instinctive energy of genius prevailed ; fortunately, the England of Elizabeth was not the Italy of Leo." J. Churton Collins, *Essays and Studies*, 142.

[2] Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII*, Act iii, Scene 2. See p. 62 below.

Roman Emperor, even as Petrarch had sought it more mildly from the pagan philosophers of ancient Rome, imbrued Germany in the religious warfare, which retarded her development for years. It was ill sailing out of the shallows in that age. The venturers encountered cross winds and contrary currents, and were overwhelmed on land, as at sea. The terror of the stake and the axe discouraged, though it could not repel, in researchers of the secrets of the mind, that tempered spirit of the Renaissance which had driven the Navigators across the ocean. Even so gentle a scholar as Sir Thomas More (1478–1535), at one time Lord Chancellor of England, and author of a Latin *Utopia*, which was translated into French in 1550, and into the writer's native English in the following year, did not escape the block. His book, too, was a document of the Renaissance; his mind responded to its impression, and his favourite reading in prison was the *Consolation of Philosophy*, composed in prison a thousand years before by Boethius, the last of the Romans[1]; yet More foundered on the Northern rocks, on which was planted the flag of authority. We shall come later to François Rabelais (1495–1553), with his brilliant shifts to avoid destruction. The most notable writer who avoided it was Erasmus (1466–1536), "the educator of Europe," as he has been called, who kept a middle course between extremes, and whose shining scholarship was a beacon to the higher ground from which the torrent of the Reformation was receding. He and one or two kindred spirits sought to capture the best elements of both movements: the desire for fame, the love of learning, the exploring zeal, which marked the Renaissance-men in the south, and the moral purpose, the liberal principles, the fearless faith, which the Reformers added in the north.

[1] See p. 19 above.

So we answer our question above. Edmund Spenser, unlike Gabriel Harvey, was not merely a pupil of the Renaissance. He passed beyond the aims of the French Pleiad, and overwent the Italian pageant of Ariosto. His reform of language was a part, even an aspect, of his reform of the mind which it expressed. His "good governour and vertuous man", typified, allegorically, by King Arthur, in the tradition of the old *matière de Bretagne*, was to teach by example abstract lessons of politics and ethics, since "so much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample than by rule". But the rule was underneath it all the time: the iron rule under the soft stanzas, which steeped the senses of readers of the *Faery Queen* in music as sweet as that of the Italian poets. Political and ethical doctrine was Spenser's *plus* to the sum of Renaissance striving: political doctrine, such as Sir Thomas More had sought in his Utopian romance of reality; ethical doctrine, such as Erasmus had extracted from priestly preserves by his *Novum Instrumentum*, or new tool to prise open the sealed mysteries of the Greek Testament. Thus, Spenser, like Chaucer, Italy's pupil, became, like Chaucer again, England's poet; and it is as the second great writer of English poetry—not less English in sentiment and tradition, and in its response to the influences of sky and sea, because it was extracted from a foreign matrix—that Spenser may finally be characterized in the words of Sir Sidney Lee[1]:

> It is not as a chivalric story nor as an allegory, it is not as an epic narrative nor as an ethical tractate, nor indeed is it as an exposition of Elizabethan ideals and sentiment that Spenser's poem is to be finally judged. Despite all his ethical professions and his patriotic zeal, it was to the muse of poetry alone that Spenser swore unswerving fealty.

[1] *Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 205.

SPENSER

For Spenser, too, raised poetry under our fogs, and even merriment among our marshes. He, too, though taught by foreign masters, transfused his exemplars into English poetry. He, too, though a language-reformer, like the great Italians to whom he owed allegiance, was the master not the servant of his words, and achieved in the *Faery Queen*, or rather in such parts of it as he left completed,[1] a book of English poetry which is a constant delight—which is read by the young for its romance, and by the discerning for its beauty, and by all Englishmen and Englishwomen for its high faith in courtesy and gentleness, and the discipline which leads to noble deeds.

[1] The epic of the *Faery Queen* was designed to be "disposed into XII Books fashioning XII Moral Virtues". Books i, ii, iii were published in 1589; Books iv, v, vi in 1598; the last six books were not finished. Among other of Spenser's writings were *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* (including *Astrophel*, his lament for Sir Philip Sidney), 1595; *Four Hymns*, 1596; and a prose *View of the State of Ireland*, where he spent some years as a provincial governor, published posthumously in 1633.

CHAPTER III

Shakespeare

CHAUCER and Spenser alike we have seen devoted to two objects : (1) to raise their native language to the dignity of a classical tongue—*classical* including in each instance the classics of Italy (and France) as well as of ancient (Greece and) Rome ; and (2) to utilize the powers, thus exalted and enhanced, as a means to a new way of life. The art of living rose with the art of writing ; knowledge and speech, conduct and expression, marched together to an expanding national consciousness. Just as Wordsworth, in a passage already quoted, looked to the classics of his own country, not merely for " the tongue that Shakespeare spake ", but also for " the faith and morals which Milton held ", so English students of Humanism and the Renaissance drew from the French and Italian books (and the Greek and Latin books behind them), which they conned and absorbed so diligently, not language-reforms only, but types of character and standards of morality.

When we come to the greater name of Shakespeare, who was twelve years younger than Spenser, we find this double devotion more fully, if less consciously, at work. He left our language and our conduct—the speech and character of an Englishman—raised to an even higher power, to an ampler measure of capacity, than Chaucer or Spenser had brought them to. Chaucer's pilgrims rode from Southwark to Canterbury ; Shakespeare's circled the globe. Spenser's ideal knight was to be perfect in the twelve moral virtues ; Shakespeare ranged securely through the whole province

of human passion. We shall come to some of the evidence later on. Here it is timely to observe that Shakespeare's view-point, as the Americans call it, was broadened beyond that of his predecessors. Even the very few years which divided his birth in 1564 from that of Gabriel Harvey in 1545, Edmund Spenser in 1552, Sir Philip Sidney and John Lyly[1] in or near 1554, even those ten or twenty years added space and breadth to an Englishman's vision, and pushed back the barriers of darkness, very much as they were pushed back between 1901 and 1918. Historians mark a distinction between England before 1588 and after that year of naval victory. The distinction lay in a quickening of the forces which had been accumulating more slowly before ; in an intensifying of the national consciousness, which had been seeking channels of expression ; and it is obvious that the genius of Shakespeare, on whose work these generalizations particularly depend, and who arrived in London in 1586, would itself be quickened by such incitements, at the Court, in the green-rooms, and in the taverns. He plunged more securely than others into the full, fast life of those London nights and days, because they were closed and alternated by the more sober fare of Stratford-on-Avon, where he was born and died, and where he came back at irregular intervals in his lifetime for mental and bodily refreshment. His fellow-playwright, Christopher Marlowe (1564–93), some of whose dramas will occupy us below, fell a victim to London's lure ; Shakespeare's sanity resisted it, and Shakespeare's circumstances, fostering his sanity, saved him from the counter-temptation, to which Harvey, for example, succumbed, of overloading his intellect

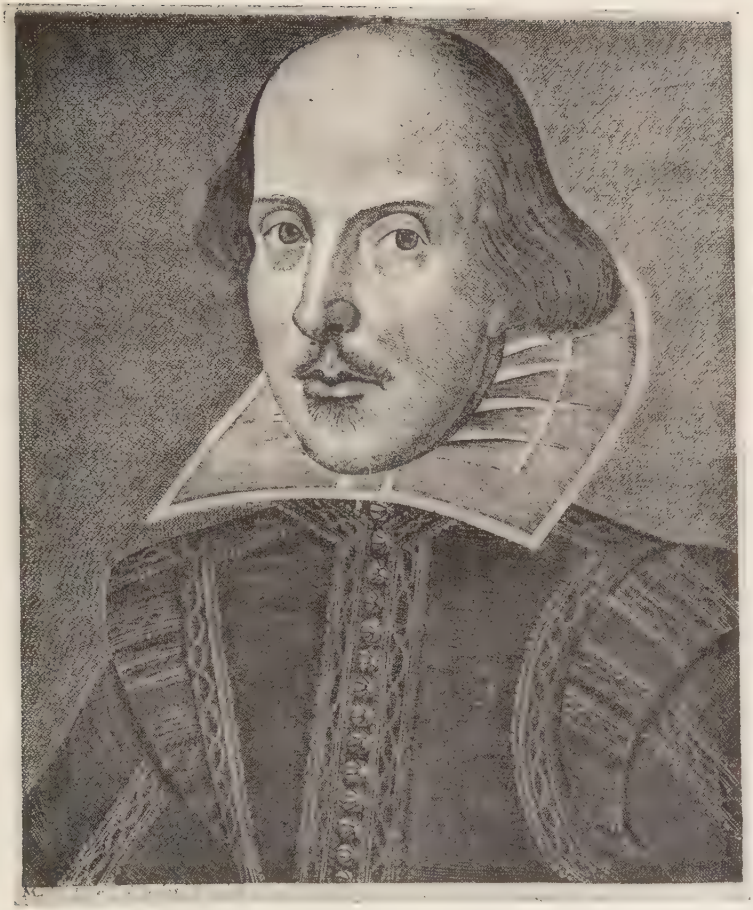
[1] Author of *Euphues*, *The Anatomy of Wit*, 1579 ; see Appendix III. The name of Thomas Kyd (*c.* 1558–94) should be added, for the sake of a lost *Hamlet* play, which he probably wrote in 1587.

with learning. He was neither a vagabond, like some of the player-playwrights in the companies to which he belonged, nor a pedant, like some of the scholars whose fame accrues to Shakespeare's age ; indeed, " he was not for an age, but for all time," as Ben Jonson (1573–1637), the literary dictator of that age, greatly said of him.

Accordingly, in pursuing our plan of placing the literature of England in relation to that of the Continent and in inspecting Shakespeare by the same rays—the Italy-ray, the France-ray, etc.—which we have applied to Chaucer and Spenser, we need neither assume with one school of critics that Shakespeare was an illiterate boor, nor with another, even more futile, that the plays were written in secret by the learned Chancellor, Francis Bacon. There is almost contemporary evidence (1662, by Thomas Fuller) to the " wit-combats " which Shakespeare was competent to sustain with Ben Jonson, a very learned man, at their favourite Mermaid Tavern : " which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war : Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." No doubt, he was making mental notes all the time, and drinking in learning through the pores of his skin. Yes, Shakespeare, too, was pervious to the rays of Continental and classical culture, though he left his grammar school for an attorney's office, and not for Oxford or Cambridge, where Harvey, Spenser, Sidney, Lyly, Marlowe and Jonson proceeded from Merchant Taylors, Shrewsbury, Westminster, etc. " The sweet, witty soul of Ovid," wrote an English critic (Francis Meres) in 1598, " lives in mellifluous

and honey-tongued Shakespeare," and another English critic (Sir Sidney Lee) wrote in 1898 : " a few hours spent over Plutarch's *Lives* brought into being in Shakespeare's brain the true aspects of Roman character and Roman inspiration." Somehow, Shakespeare was aware of the " wit ", or learning, available in his eager age. He was aware of Spenser in *Faeryland*, of Sidney in *Arcadia*, of More in *Utopia*, and of Lyly in the *England of Euphues* ; and, behind these contemporary romances, he was aware, by hints, or guesses, or dropped words, or seized occasions, out of books, or pamphlets, or songs, or oral tradition afloat behind the stage, of the sources from which the romancers drew, though, unlike Spenser, he never studied the authentic texts of Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, Tasso, Sannazzaro, Boccaccio, and the rest. We have to take account of more sources for Shakespeare's dramas than for the writings of his predecessors and contemporaries—more, not less, despite his lack of scholarship. In this context we are not referring to the obvious quarries, such as Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1578) or North's *Plutarch* (1579), from which he dug his English and Roman history-plays respectively. We refer to movements of thought which were current in his day, and to which he turned with the tides and the winds ; to forces, tendencies and opinions, which helped to set the poet's course ; to the liberating ideas of Machiavelli (1469–1527), the anatomist of princes' favours, of Rabelais (1495–1553), inventor of Gargantua, and of Montaigne (1533–92), inquiring *que sçais-je ?* —three writers, among many, one Italian and two Frenchmen,[1] who were potent makers of the modern mind.

[1] The following dates are more significant : Innocent Gentillet, a French Huguenot, wrote an *Anti-Machiavelli*, with selections, 1576, which was translated into English by Simon Patericke, 1577 ;



SHAKESPEARE

He was not of an age, but for all time—BEN JONSON

[*face p. 50*

Before coming to Machiavelli—Niccolo di Bernardo dei Machiavelli—statesman and political philosopher, who wrote a *Florentine History*, an *Art of War*, and other works, besides his famous treatise on *Il Principe* (The Prince), we may briefly revise our impressions of some of the books written before him and in his time. We shall not bring more books into account ; we shall merely try to select and draw together certain aspects of some books which we have considered, and of which Shakespeare would have had cognizance.

Our revision starts with Dante (1265–1321), the greatest poet of the Catholic Middle Ages, whose transfiguration of human passion was achieved in his Italian epic poem of Hell (*Inferno*), Purgatory (*Purgatorio*), and Heaven (*Paradiso*), known as the *Divina Commedia*, and in its prelude, the *Vita Nuova*, a prose-poem of the dawning love-life. We may have occasion to come back to Dante's Italian writings, and to follow his sublimation of the mortal Beatrice Portinari into the mystical Beatrice reigning in Paradise, by " the Love which moves the sun and the other stars ". But the sublime poet—this is our present point—was at the same time an ardent Italian patriot, eager to build his country's liberties on the shallow foundations permitted by the Church in his day ; and his patriotic sentiment found expression along parallel lines of national consciousness. He wrote—he was the first to write—constructive treatises on philology and government (*de Vulgari Eloquio* and *de Monarchia*), and he wrote them in Latin, because the appeal of that historic language would strengthen the kindred Italian case. Accordingly, apart from their intrinsic value, these treatises are

the Tudor translation of Montaigne's *Essais*, by John Florio, was published in 1603. The standard version of Rabelais, by Thomas Urchard (Urquart), appeared later in the seventeenth century, but his fame had crossed the channel before.

notable for their evidence, as early as the thirteenth century, to the twin roads followed to one goal, which we have remarked in writers in other countries and later generations. In order to build a free community—free of art and letters and other activities; free of Humanism, in one word—on the breaking foundations of the medieval Church-State, two essential props had to be established. The liberated State had to be provided with a fit *language*, and it had to be provided with a fit *polity*. Dante, five centuries before Wordsworth, and without his historical experience, perceived that the sanction of freedom rested equally on language and morals; he was inspired—no smaller word serves—to teach that an illustrious tongue and just institutions are equal parts of national consciousness.

The perception grew, in Italy and beyond, and it is of immense importance to literary history. It grew almost spontaneously in Italy, where patterns of language and polity were recoverable fom Italy's classic past. Petrarch (1304–74), for example, who was seventeen years old when Dante died, applied himself assiduously to their recovery. If the Petrarchan model for the sonnet is still, after six hundred years, a standard for comparison, the concluding words of Petrarch's *Ode to Italy*:

> Che l'antico valore
> Negli italici cuor non è ancor morto—

for the ancient valour of the Italian heart is not yet dead—are still a summons to political liberty. Boccaccio (1313–75), author of the *Decameron*, and first incumbent of the Dante Chair in Florence, was devoted to the same objects, though he was less sensitive than Petrarch to the historic appeal of ancient Italia to modern Italians. It may seem that Boccaccio's tastes prevailed, and that the two aims

were divided and sought separately, after Humanism had crossed the Alps : that the Renaissance in Italy, that is to say, was more constantly devoted to the perfection of a worthy language, and the Reformation beyond to improving the means of government. But the distinction disappeared in practice. The fine arts marched with the art of government. The Medici merchant-princes at Florence patronized poets and organized polity ; Castiglione's *Courtier* was educated in the art of government, and many other arts ; Erasmus, north of the Alps, discussed the limits of Ciceronianism in style as well as the training of a Christian prince ; and Luther, who made the Bible talk German, challenged the rule of the Holy Roman Emperor. The two roads of language and government remained open to lead men to one goal ; and, though Ariosto in Italy and Ronsard in France cared more for pure speech than free polity, yet Spenser in England had ample warrant for combining language reform with the improvement of the art of a " good governor ", and even for ascribing both parts of his design to the " ensample " of his Italian masters.

The common goal was national consciousness. One Italian reformer, however, departing from Boccaccio's lead, sought it chiefly and consistently along the road of good government. Machiavelli, a Florentine like Dante, and, like Dante, a political exile from Florence, was moved, like his greatest fellow-citizen, to write *de Monarchia*, about government, in a treatise entitled *Il Principe* (The Prince). But Florentine politics had changed since Dante wrote on the same subject in or about 1311. Dante died when Petrarch, as a youth, was lighting his innocent candle to Cicero and Republican Rome ; Machiavelli was contemporary with Luther, who fanned that flame to a European conflagration. Machiavelli was further on the factious road to

freedom. He had shared the experience of his native Florence under the fiery rule of the reformer-martyr, Savonarola (1452–98), and her invasion (1494) by King Charles VIII of France, and he had reflected deeply on the causes which had exposed her to such dire vicissitudes. He would fain save her from a repetition of them by strengthening the resistance of her *future* ruler ; and he drew up, partly for his own guidance, as a possible minister to the future prince, that treatise on *il Principe* (The Prince), which was to re-establish a Medici in Florence, and which might be useful, too, to princes and princes' ministers beyond her gates, in the distracted politics of the sixteenth century.

This was the book, written about 1513, two centuries after Dante's treatise, but not published in Machiavelli's lifetime, which, infamous for four hundred years in the philosophy and practice of politics, was said to be largely responsible for the massacre of the Huguenots in Paris on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572, and which was even cited among the indirect causes of the Great War, 1914. Thus, it earned an evil reputation. But the sagacious statesman who wrote it, though known in England as " Old Nick ", was much less black than he was painted. First of all, he cleared the ground by selecting the form of government best suited to a city-state in his own day :

> All States, all Powers, that have held and hold rule over men have been and are either Republics or Principalities. Principalities are either hereditary, in which the family has been long established ; or they are new. The new are either entirely new, or they are, as it were, members annexed to the hereditary State of the Prince who has acquired them.

He ruled out the republican form, which he had written of elsewhere, and concentrated on the new mixed State, in which a Medici was to be restored

at Florence ; and, in solving the difficulties which he foresaw, Machiavelli took the pragmatist's course of relying on observation, and writing of what he knew. "It appears to me more profitable," he said, "to follow up the real truth of a matter than the imagination of it" ; and his analysis of rulers' mistakes was based on actual instances, and was directed to the formulation of means for their avoidance by the new rulers ; particularly the future ruler of Florence. Thus, he argued that a certain Duke (it does not matter here which Duke) ought not to have taken the part which he did in a Papal election : "He who believes that new benefits will cause great personages to forget old injuries is deceived. Therefore, the Duke erred in his choice, and it was the cause of his ultimate ruin." This is Machiavelli's method in *The Prince*. He selects particular examples, and founds general laws of rulers' conduct on the bare motives and naked facts which he has exposed.

It was by the general laws thus deduced that ill fame was attached to *il Principe*, and that Machiavellism, as a synonym for evil statecraft, was derived from the teachings of Machiavelli. We may select one or two of those general laws :

> A Prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty. . . . And, of all Princes, it is impossible for the new Prince to avoid the imputation of cruelty, owing to new States being full of dangers.
>
> Our experience has been that those Princes who have done great things have held good faith of little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men by craft, and in the end have overcome those who have relied on their word.
>
> A wise lord cannot, nor ought he to, keep faith when such observance may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer.

> I consider that it is better to be adventurous than cautious, because fortune is a woman, and, if you wish to keep her under, it is necessary to beat and ill-use her ; and it is seen that she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. She is, therefore, always, womanlike, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity command her.

It is extraordinarily difficult in retrospect to reconcile this absolute prince—cruel, crafty, unfaithful, and violent—with the scholar-gentleman of the Renaissance: to reconcile Machiavelli's *principe* with his contemporary Castiglione's *cortegiano*. Yet, because both types were made in one country and at one time, and because each bore the impress of actual experience; since there *were* Machiavellian princes, and courtiers as close to type as Sir Philip Sidney, we must expect to find coarser figures on the political road to national consciousness than Spenser's Arthur, "the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised," and eloquent with the speech minted by Ariosto and Tasso. Aristotle and Ariosto did not know all that Machiavelli knew about princes. There were plenty of Utopias, said Machiavelli : "many have pictured Republics and Principalities which in fact have never been known or seen" ; but "he who neglects what is done for what ought to be done sooner effects his ruin than his preservation" ; and "hence", in the practical statesman's eyes, "it is necessary for a Prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong, and to make use of it or not according to necessity."

Have princes and prelates possessed such knowledge, and used it or not according to necessity ? We need not pursue this investigation through the annals of statecraft in Europe ; "Machiavelli," wrote Lord Acton in 1891, "is the earliest conscious and

articulate exponent of certain living forces in the present world. He is not a vanishing type, but a constant and contemporary influence. He is more rationally intelligible by lights falling not only from the century in which he wrote, but from our own " ; and, in the final resort, the reconciliation between *il principe* and *il cortegiano*—Machiavelli's prince and Castiglione's courtier—is effected in the laboratory of human character. Spenser's Gloriana, after all, was Queen Elizabeth, watching and warding the national consciousness of Tudor England.

It is more to our immediate purpose to note that these heady doctrines for Kings, first enunciated in 1513, but not published till some years later—this will to power, this right to do wrong, this wisdom of treachery, and the rest—passed from Italy into England. As early as 1588, we read in the Prologue to an English play (*The Jew of Malta*, by Christopher Marlowe) :

> Albeit the world thinks Machiavel is dead,
> Yet was his soul but flown across the Alps,

and we cannot but contrast that flight, that naturalization of Machiavellism in England, with the prior passage across the Alps of gentler counsels of the Renaissance, carried northwards by Chaucer, Sidney, Colet, Reuchlin (1455–1522, the German Hebraist), and Erasmus, who had found a spiritual home in Italy. This contrast was noted by a contemporary. " Now," wrote Roger Ascham in his *Schoolmaster*—the date was 1570—English visitors to Italy were bringing home, " for religion, Papistry, or worse ; for learning, less, commonly, than they carried out with them ; for a policy, a factious heart." We are concerned here chiefly with the policy, and while, in the Prologue to the same play, Marlowe's Machiavellian hero, counted " religion but a childish

toy ", he plainly announced the central dogma of his master's political creed in the ominous verses :

> Might first made Kings, and laws were then most sure
> When, like the Draco's, they were writ in blood.

Was might to be right on the English stage ? Was English law to be cemented by civil blood ? Shakespeare, straining after the theatre, and quitting Stratford for London in 1586, was born in the same year as Marlowe, and became subject to like dramatic influences ; indeed, Marlowe, by a great poet's testimony, " first and alone guided Shakespeare into the right way of work ".[1] Would " the soul of Machiavel " enter Shakespeare ? Was he, too, to set supermen on the English stage ? Let us rehearse our threads very briefly. Shakespeare was guided into the way of dramatic work by Marlowe, his contemporary, whose contribution to the Renaissance in England was partly directed by the flight of the soul of Machiavelli across the Alps ; and Machiavelli's contribution consisted in his tractate on *The Prince*, which was already infamous for its power of political and moral mischief. English literature, following the Italian road, which had led Chaucer to Petrarch in the fourteenth century, was led in the sixteenth by Marlowe to Machiavelli. Was its final " ensample of a good governor ", pursued with such arduous pains by the makers of the Renaissance in Italy and the Reformation beyond, to be founded by the greatest Renaissance playwright on the lines of Machiavelli's model prince ?

The answer, happily, is No. Shakespeare, among his services to English literature, saved it from an Italian blood-bath. He stopped short at the precipice of Machiavelli. As Spenser rescued poetic diction from excessive deference to Italianate rules of prosody

[1] Swinburne, *The Age of Shakespeare*, 14.

and rhetoric, so Shakespeare rescued dramatic fiction from the exceeding blood-and-thunder of foreign playwrights, bred and trained in the tradition of Roman Seneca.[1] He corrected for English practice the extreme conclusions drawn from the prince of Florence, conclusions which admirably fitted the horrific tradition of Latin tragedy, and so he moderated in England the full heritage of the Italian Renaissance. "Fortunately," we have read, "the England of Elizabeth was not the Italy of Leo"—Luther's Pope, we remember, and Machiavelli's; and fortunately, too, we may add, William Shakespeare was not a man of exact learning. The "native woodnotes wild" of his beloved Warwickshire were never completely stilled by foreign echoes of classical voices in London; and, though the Renaissance inaugurated by Petrarch, when he consulted Cicero for statecraft and style, was consummated in Shakespeare, again there was a *plus* to the sum.

"Might first made Kings," cried Barabas-Machiavel in the Prologue to Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, and the Machiavellian hero, supported by the Senecan stage-craft, then established a footing in English tragedy. But he could not capture the mind of England. Shakespeare, a saner genius, and blessed with longer life than Marlowe, reinterpreted policy to rulers. There were three pre-eminent dramatic motives employed by Machiavellian playwrights: three types

[1] Lucius Annæus Seneca (4 B.C. – A.D. 65), tutor to the Emperor Nero, wrote nine plays on topics of Greek mythology, which became the models for European tragedy in the countries and centuries of the Renaissance. In England, Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc*, 1561, which opened our tragic stage, was composed strictly in that tradition. The stage ghost was a Senecan character, and "English scholars", says Addington Symonds (*Shakespeare's Predecessors*, 175), "went to school with Seneca beneath the ferule of Italian ushers." See, too, F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy*, and the essay on Literature by Professor Mackail, in *The Legacy of Rome* (Oxford University Press).

of the superman-hero which they introduced on to the stage. These were (1) the prince, greedy of power, (2) the usurer, greedy of gold, and (3) the book-weary philosopher, greedy of sensual relaxation. We find the prince in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, the usurer in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, and the philosopher in Marlowe's *Faustus* ; and from each of these plays we might quote recognizably Machiavellian speeches. A passage of hyperbole from *Tamburlaine* may be submitted as typical :

> I will, with engines never exercised,
> Conquer, sack, and utterly consume
> Your cities and your golden palaces ;
> And, till by vision or by speech I hear
> Immortal Jove say, Cease, my Tamburlaine !
> I will persist a terror to the world . . .
> There is a God, full of revenging wrath,
> From whom the thunder and the lightning breaks,
> Whose scourge I am, and him will I obey . . .
> See where my slave, the ugly monster, Death,
> Shaking and quivering, pale and wan for fear,
> Stands aiming at me with his murdering dart,
> Who flies away at every glance I give,
> And when I look away, comes stealing on.
> Villain, away and hie thee to the field !
> I and my armies come to load thy back
> With souls of thousand mangled carcasses.
> Look where he goes ! but see, he comes again,
> Because I stay ! Techelles, let us march,
> And weary Death with bearing souls to Hell.

But this dramatic moment was short-lived. Machiavelli's hour in England passed away. The power-greed we find redramatized in Shakespeare's Richard II, Richard III, King Lear, and Lady Macbeth ; the gold-greed in his Shylock ; the sense-greed in Macbeth and in Goethe's Faust. Yet, clear as Marlowe's guidance was, and closely as Shakespeare followed it, he parted significantly from

his leader. The Shakespearean prince exposed his Marlowe - Machiavellian predecessor ; Shylock corrected Barabas ; Shakespeare's finer humanity reduced the extremer effects, and, concomitantly, a nobler eloquence chastened the turgid expression. For a brief, even a perilous, moment, a point of view which we may call Machiavellian threatened English society. Salvation was due, among other causes, to the moral bias of Puritanism, Queen Elizabeth's refusal of the Habsburg yoke, the sturdy common sense of English seamen, their inability to hate a beaten foe, the downright hardihood of our Tudor sovereigns, and our English preference for the open air ; ultimately, therefore, to the temperamental difference between Englishmen and Italians. So the mirror of Shakespeare did not err. Did Might make Kings, and Kings presume to weary Death ? Swiftly Shakespeare confounded them by a touch of graver philosophy :

> For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings :
> How some have been deposed, some slain in war ;
> Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed ;
> Some poisoned by their wives ; some sleeping kill'd ;
> All murdered : for within the hollow crown
> That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
> Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits,
> Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
> Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
> To monarchize, be feared, and kill with looks,[1]
> Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
> As if this flesh which walls about our life
> Were brass impregnable, and measur'd thus
> Comes at the last and with a little pin
> Bores through his castle-wall, and farewell king !
>
> *King Richard II*, iii, 2.

[1] Cf. " Who flies away with every glance I give ", in the passage from *Tamburlaine*, above.

Machiavelli furnished his dummy-prince with every pulley and lever of absolute power ; Shakespeare showed the mechanism at work, and the artificial fabric fell to pieces :

> I have ventured,
> Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
> This many summers in a sea of glory,
> But far beyond my depth : my high-blown pride
> At length broke under me, and now has left me,
> Weary and old with service, to the mercy
> Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.
> Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye :
> I feel my heart new open'd. O, how wretched
> Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours !
> There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
> That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
> More pangs and fears than wars or women have :
> And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
> Never to hope again.
>
> *King Henry VIII*, iii, 2.

One more Shakespearean test of the Machiavellian polity may be suggested. King Richard II exclaims, in the scene from which we quoted just now :

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm off from an anointed king ;
> The breath of worldly men cannot depose
> The deputy elected by the Lord,

and this monarchical sentiment was in full accordance with the view of Kingship by divine right, which brought so much woe upon Europe. But consider Shakespeare's tragic irony, in his *King Richard III*, Act iii, Scene 5, where we hear the citizens of London, through their representative, the Mayor, say ditto to a Machiavellian prince. The future King has explained to the Mayor :

> What, think you we are Turks or infidels ?
> Or that we would, against the form of law,

> Proceed thus rashly to the villain's death ?
> But that the extreme peril of the case,
> The peace of England and our persons' safety,
> Enforced us to this execution ?

And his worship returned the reply expected from obsequious mayors, when the prince or his minister pleaded royal safety and necessity for an act of treachery and violence [1] :

> I'll acquaint our duteous citizens
> With all your just proceedings in this cause.

But duteous citizens, enlightened in England by Shakespeare's dramatic irony, were to wash off the balm from an anointed King so soon as 1649, within a generation of Shakespeare's death, and, though in a literary history we must leave politics to politicians, it is legitimate to point out that England's mind was partly made by her men of letters, and that, by as much as Shakespeare departed from the lead which Machiavelli had given to Marlowe, by so much the England of the Stuarts was not the France of the Bourbons ; by so much England in 1649 differed from France in 1789, and escaped the era of *L'Etat c'est moi*. Historical students will supply the gaps in this generalization from the study of literature.

We submit yet one more illustration of Shakespeare's way with Marlowe-Machiavelli, on the long road opened by Dante—the road which was pursued across the Alps—towards the goal of national self-consciousness. The drama of *Troilus and Cressida* is unique among Shakespeare's plays for several causes. (1) Its date cannot be fixed with certainty. Critics find that there were probably three author's versions, current respectively in 1599, 1602–3, and 1609, when two quarto editions were issued. If so,

[1] " It is necessary for a Prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong." *Il Principe*, above.

the earliest of the three versions must have been written in the epoch of Marlowe's influence.[1] (2) Dryden, in 1679, "because the piece was Shakespeare's, and that there appeared in some places of it the admirable genius of the author, undertook to remove the heaps of rubbish under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly buried"; or, as "Shakespeare's ghost" was made to say in the Prologue to Dryden's revision:

> In this my rough-drawn play you shall behold
> Some master-strokes, so many and so bold,
> That he who meant to alter, found 'em such,
> He shook, and thought it sacrilege to touch.

(3) The character of Thersites in *Troilus* was seized by Shakespeare from George Chapman's translation of Homer's *Iliad* (Books I–VII), 1598: a signal instance of the great playwright's rapid grasp of dramatic material.[2] (4) Its temperamental evidence to "the history of Shakespeare's mind and art is one of the most elusive of Shakespearean problems"[3]; and there are other points of special interest. But, keeping close to our examination of Shakespeare's political sanity, ripening the cruder statecraft which Marlowe extracted from Machiavelli, and recalling that Marlowe was Shakespeare's "guide" as well as his contemporary in birth, we may quote from the speech of Ulysses in *Troilus* I, iii, some illuminating passages.

> The specialty of rule hath been neglected,

[1] Compare Shakespeare's "pearl, whose price hath launched above a thousand ships" (*Troilus*, III, ii, 82), with Marlowe's "face that launched a thousand ships".

[2] Chapman's Homer entered literature again in the sonnet of Keats, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, 1815. Shakespeare's *Troilus*, more generally, went back to Chaucer, and, through him, to Boccaccio. See p. 16 above.

[3] Professor C. H. Herford, Macmillan's Eversley Edition, vol. iii, 358.

Ulysses declares ; and

> degree being vizarded,
> The unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask.
> The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre
> Observe degree, priority, and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, system, form,
> Office and custom, in all line of order ;
> . . . O, when degree is shaked,
> Which is the ladder to all high designs,
> Then enterprise is sick ! How could communities,
> Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
> Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
> The primogenitive and due of birth,
> Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
> But by degree, stand in authentic place ?
> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And, hark, what discord follows ! . . .
> Strength should be lord of imbecility,
> And the rude son should strike his father dead.
> Force should be right ; or rather, right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too,
> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite ;
> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And last eat up himself.

From the words " Force should be right " onwards, these verses might have been written—perhaps they were—in direct contravention to Marlowe's Machiavellian doctrine. The will-to-power, displayed on Marlowe's stage, as in Machiavelli's treatise, is shown by Shakespeare to degenerate into the wolf, which makes the universe its prey, as in Tamburlaine's boastful lines above :

> I will persist a terror to the world,
> And weary Death with bearing souls to Hell.

And the exaltation of " degree " as the ladder to all high designs, and the key-note in the harmony of government, is a maxim of political philosophy, which later thinkers repeat but hardly surpass. Here, again, we must leave to historical specialists the pleasure of following the course of Shakespeare's acute political wisdom, from this speech of Ulysses in *Troilus*, through the writings of Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) in Holland, and of Richard Hooker (1554–1600), Shakespeare's contemporary, Bishop Berkeley (1685–1753) and Edmund Burke (1729–97) in England. The foundation of International Law, which was the very opposite to Machiavelli's doctrine of the State Absolute, may be traced back to this principle of degrees. For " the service of Grotius, his forerunners and successors ", says a modern jurist trained in Acton's school, " is not that they produced a scientific system under which State action could be classified, but that they succeeded in placing some bounds to the unlimited predominance of ' reason of state ' " (e.g. " the extreme peril of the case ", in *Richard III*, above). " Machiavelli's was a rough generalization from observed facts," he continues. " The object of Grotius was not to make men perfect or treat them as such, but to see whether there were not certain common duties generally felt as binding, if not always practised, and to set forth an ideal. . . . The founders of International Law did not stop, they regulated the struggle for existence".[1] The relevancy of this Law to the communities which, as in the *Troilus* passage, were to practise peaceful commerce from divided shores, and to the crowns and sceptres set in order by degree, is obvious. Less obvious, except by reference to Shakespeare's transcendent genius, is his anticipation of it as early as 1599, when Marlowe was but six years dead. Lastly,

[1] J. N. Figgis, *From Gerson to Grotius*, 188.

lest we should seem in these remarks to be transgressing the bounds of pure literature, we may submit to thoughtful students a comparison of the above passage from *Troilus* with Tennyson's earliest patriotic poems : particularly Shakespeare's

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And, hark, what discord follows !

with Tennyson's

> Regard gradation, lest the soul
> Of Discord race the rising wind.

Public order and the law of communities have always been closely associated with personal liberty and the law of the individual. Thus, the Humanists' preoccupation with government reform led men's thoughts inevitably to the consideration of the place of man in the universe, of his relation to his Maker and to his fellow-men, of his powers, his rights, his duties. This extension of the mind of Europe was a part of the process of the Renaissance and the Reformation. The break-up of authority in opinion, which was partly the result and partly the cause of vernacular versions of the Scriptures and the application of criticism to their texts, left more freedom of intellect to the individual, whose nascent self-reliance and self-will were encouraged by the opportunities of the sixteenth century. Adventure, very broadly speaking, was transferred from groups of Crusaders, deriving a joint sanction from Rome, to mariners independently exploring strange seas under the stars, or astronomers exploring the stars themselves ; and the change of status and objective brought new problems of character in its train.

Those problems persist to the present day. The adventure of Robert Scott in the Antarctic in 1912, the adventure of Sir Alan Cobham in the air in 1926, to mention two signal examples, are instinctively

spoken of as Elizabethan ; but, despite our English preference for that name, the motive is earlier than Queen Elizabeth and more widely distributed than her sway. Take the motive of *Utopia*, for example. It was in 1515 that Thomas More (1478–1535), Wolsey's successor as Lord Chancellor of England, conceived the idea of that book. He happened one day to be watching the bright, busy scene on Antwerp quay. There he met a stranger, as he relates, " whom by his favour and apparel forthwith I judged to be a mariner." More's judgment was correct. The mariner was a survivor of the expedition led across the Atlantic by Amerigo, who gave his name to America. He was of the type " that took more thought and care for travailing than dying ; having customably in his mouth these sayings—He that hath no grave, is covered with the sky ; and, The way to heaven out of all places is of like length and distance ".[1] *Sapit mare*, it tastes of the sea, and the Renaissance mood expressed in these sentiments was common to the ocean-faring peoples of Portugal, Spain, Holland, Italy, England. It struck again the romantic note, sounded in the *romans* of old French chivalry, but it struck it on a more individual key. A breath from the salt West road was blown through the Latin leaves of *Utopia*, and caused the reforms which it recommended to seem, if not near, yet real. Yet they sounded unreal and remote, at the sixteenth century's end, in the ears of the disillusioned and war-weary, who had found the perplexities of experience underlying the conventions of romance. It was from Spain, about 1603, fifteen years after the Armada, and nearly a hundred years later than *Utopia*, that Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), Shakespeare's contemporary, sent out the last of

[1] More wrote in the universal Latin of his day. *Utopia* became a European classic, and was translated into English, 1551.

the knight-errants to tilt at knight-errantry itself. To Don Quixote, in the Spanish romance of that name, "it seemed very requisite and behooveful, as well for the augmentation of his honour as for the benefit of the Commonwealth, that he himself should become a knight-errant, and go throughout the world with his horse and armour, to seek adventures, and practise in person all that he had read was used by knights of old." The memory of some of us goes back to the *fin de siècle* note at the close of the nineteenth century. Cervantes' immortal Don Quixote depicted chivalry *fin de siècle*. For the problem of character after 1600 included the aftermath of adventure. It included quixotism as well as courtesy ; Don Quixote as well as More's mariner ; the cloak woven by Castiglione for Sir Philip Sidney—and the rents hidden behind its seams.

The mind of Shakespeare was aware of both aspects. *How* he became aware of them, in spite of his small Latin and less Greek, we shall presently inquire : we need not assume that he had read all the books in which the evidence was contained. But here we may go further, and say, that the mind of Europe was aware of both aspects, despite the contentions in its body politic ; that Cervantes and Shakespeare for example, were alike aware of a harmony of art, reconciling the differences of experience, and were alike competent to correct the appearances by the truth of human character. Spain and England were at war in the sixteenth century, but the mind of Europe, incarnate in the greatest Spaniard and Englishman of the day, pursued a peace more enduring than of treaties.[1]

[1] Cervantes and Shakespeare died within eleven days of each other in April, 1616. By using the old and the new calendars, the anniversary can be kept on the same day ; and, very appropriately, in the midst of European war, on 23rd April, 1916, the Kings of England and Spain exchanged telegrams on the common tercentenary : "another happy

We need not assume that Shakespeare was book-learned. Still less need we assume, in order to explain his preoccupation with graver themes in his later years, that his life was divided into successive periods of blithe and gloomy passion. The explanation lies in the times, not the man. The grave note deepened in Shakespeare, not because he missed happiness or dwelt with sorrow—" no tangible evidence supports the allegation," says Sir Sidney Lee—but because the character of Don Quixote, the quixotic complex, in a modern phrase, was deeper than that of More's mariner, or of Sir Philip Sidney, or of Castiglione's courtier, or even of Spenser's Prince Arthur ; because the years from 1601 onwards differed from those, say, before 1590.

The mind of Europe *fin de siècle*, the mind which doubted and questioned, which paused at the edge of adventure, and won through to disappointment with its results, which, faced independently with individual decisions, could rise on its own strong wings to the satisfaction of duty alone, was signally the Hamlet-mind of Shakespeare, who wrote us free on the stage from the dead hand of Seneca. It was the mind which found expression in the following, among other, memorable passages :

> There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
>
> *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. v.

> What a piece of work is a man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals !
>
> Act II, Sc. ii.

tie between our two countries," which had been enemies in the lifetime of the two poets.

To be, or not to be : that is the question :
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune ;
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them.

Act III, Sc. i.

Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused.

Act IV, Sc. iv.

The Hamlet-mind found expression in other Shakespearean characters, but we select the eponymous play particularly, partly because it is best known and partly because of its exceptional influence on later European literature. To this influence we shall come back, when we meet Shakespeare on the Continent at various times in the following chapters. Here we are concerned with only one aspect of his frequent appearances, and with one facet only of that aspect—the character-value of Hamlet, and the philosophy of Hamlet's psychology. We pass over, accordingly, the sensation pronounced abroad by Shakespeare's stage-effects with ghosts (*Hamlet*), witches (*Macbeth*), crowds (*Julius Cæsar*), and similar *dramatis personæ*. They broke away from the staid conventions of the pseudo-classic or neo-classic French stage[1] ; but

[1] Voltaire (1694–1778) was in England in 1726, and fell under the spell of the "barbarian" playwright, whose method offended every rule of the classic drama—of "the law of writ" as distinct from "the liberty", defined by Polonius, in his instruction to the players at Elsinore, in *Hamlet*, II, ii, 421. In Voltaire's *Brutus*, 1730, and *la Mort de César*, 1731, he showed his study of Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*; he introduced a ghost into his *Sémiramis*, 1748; *Othello* is traced in his *Zaïre*, 1733, and *Macbeth* in his *Mahomet*, 1742. Despite his subsequent reaction to the accepted rules of tragic drama, limiting its liberties of time, place and action (rules referable, eventually, to Aristotle, and famous as the Unities), Voltaire did immense service in Shakespeare propaganda in the eighteenth century.

these matters, technical to the theatre, and the critical controversies, hardly less technical, to which they gave rise, or out of which they arose, are less to our immediate purpose than the instant, inevitable fact that Shakespeare enlarged the mind of Europe, intellectually, spiritually, psychologically. He made *more* of a man than had been made before—more even than Marlowe had made of him, because Marlowe's Machiavellian supermen looked only in one direction, and Shakespeare's reasoning men looked " before and after ". This *more* in the human panoply is in the same category of advance as Chaucer's decision, noted in our first chapter, no longer to " gestë *rum-ram-ruf* by letter ". As Chaucer, aware of Italian horizons, sailed out of the limits of North-English verse, so Shakespeare, aware of thought-spaces to which we must presently turn, thrust back further the limits of man's mind : " in apprehension how like a god " ; with " capability and god-like reason ". It was for this *more* in Shakespeare's man that great writers on the Continent of Europe ran to him in the century after his death for the satisfaction of their own questionings : that Friedrich Schröder (1744–1816), for example, the leading German actor-manager, produced *Hamlet* at Hamburg in 1776 ; that German romanticists, headed by Goethe, in his recital of the apprentice-years of Wilhelm Meister, and followed with masterly skill by Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich and August Schlegel, leaped at the Shakespearean rule of life, and restored it ultimately to S. T. Coleridge, in the country from which it came, enhanced, illumined, and adorned. By the same token, the French school of classicists, with Racine as their perfect model, recognized Shakespeare as the prime exemplar of the romantic school. Nor, passing other countries by, can we omit to record in this context, how, in the nineteenth century,

Shakespeare's spirit was transfused into Russian literature and the mind of Russia, where the note of philosophic fatalism, which recurs in Russian novel after novel, was derived, finally, from Hamlet.

Thus, by the evidence of contemporaries[1] and posterity, briefly examined in some of its greatest names, Shakespeare stands out supreme above the crowd of fellow-players and playwrights, among whom he moved so genially in his lifetime, in the green-room and at the taverns. Together, and in many respects with equal craft, they patched one another's plays, and furnished from common sources the repertory of their theatrical companies. They had their audience to please, they had their living to earn, and, with the freemasonry of their low profession—for the actor's status was despised—they took their good where they could find it. An imposing list of these associates, with brilliant characterizations, will be found in *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama*, by John Addington Symonds,[2] and it would serve no purpose to rehearse their names. It is more apposite to note that, out of the long list, the one name rises transcendent. "The individuality of the Elizabethan drama is personified in Shakespeare," says Symonds; and Professor Churton Collins, though objecting to Symonds' iteration of the remark, repeats it himself in similar words: "It remained for Shakespeare to combine, and in combination to perfect, all these elements. Nothing can shake the supremacy of that mighty genius. Nothing can diminish the immense

[1] See quotation from Ben Jonson, p. 49.

[2] This book is severely criticized by Churton Collins, in *Essays and Studies* (London, 1895), pp. 90–192. Its main fault is an extravagance of diction, which Symonds, author of *The Renaissance in Italy* (seven vols.) learned in Shakespeare-criticism from Swinburne. Making allowance for this feature, and for some inaccuracies noted by Collins, the book may be confidently recommended.

interval which separated him in the maturity of his powers from the most gifted of his predecessors and contemporaries." Shakespeare-criticism is only valid in superlatives, and this judgment, by the critic of a critic, is our sufficient excuse for leaving aside the rest of the Elizabethan dramatists.

How did Shakespeare reach his Humanism? Not directly by books, as we have said, though indirectly, no doubt, by the essence of books distilled into conversation, pamphlets and broadsheets; and not directly by experience, in any sense such as Wordsworth's "with this key [viz. the Sonnet] Shakespeare unlock'd his heart", though indirectly, no doubt, by the essence of experience distilled into taste and character. Outside his genius, which cannot be analysed, Shakespeare reached it most directly by observation and alertness to impressions; by the same faculty of inductive reasoning which enables Sir Arthur Keith to build up Pithecanthropos from a vestige of a skull, and which enabled Sir Thomas More to build up the imagination of *Utopia* from that chance meeting, which we have quoted, with "a certain stranger, a man well stricken in age, with a black sunburnt face, a long beard, and a cloak cast loosely about his shoulders, whom by his favour and apparel I judged forthwith to be a mariner". We all meet strangers on our journey, but we are not all forth-right in our judgment, nor anxious to inquire where the sun blacked their faces. Some of us, too, see vestiges of antiquity, but not all of us, like Shakespeare, in *The Tempest*, can construct a Caliban out of threads of sailors' yarn, nor seize the dramatic value of a foreign essay on cannibals.[1] The foreign essayist in *The Tempest* was Montaigne (1533–92), genial, egotistic, anecdotal, conversational,

[1] The name Caliban is identical with cannibal, corrupted from caribal, i.e. Caribbean.

whose *Essais*, as noted above, were translated out of the French by John Florio in 1603, the earliest date conjectured for Shakespeare's play. A copy of Florio's Montaigne, containing the autograph of Shakespeare, and now preserved in the British Museum, increases the interest of the following parallel passages. Writing of Lycurgus and Plato, Montaigne (*Essais*, Book i, ch. 30), says that actual experience could supply examples of nations surpassing not only the "pictures with which poetry has embellished the golden age", but also the imaginings of philosophy itself.

> "It is a nation (would I answer Plato)," continues the essay, "that hath no kind of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politic superiority; no use of service, of riches, or of poverty; no contrasts, no successions, no occupations, but idle; no respect of kindred, but common; no apparel, but natural; no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corn, or metal. The very words that import lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulation, coveteousness, envy, detraction, and passion, were never heard of amongst them. How dissonant would he find his imaginary commonwealth from this perfection!"

Now compare with this extract from Montaigne the verses in *The Tempest*, Act ii, Scene 1, where Gonzalo, the honest old counsellor to Alonso, King of Naples, seeks to console his shipwrecked master. "Had I the plantation of this isle, my lord," he says,

> No kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
> Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
> No occupation; all men idle all;
> And women too, but innocent and pure;
> No sovereignty; . . .

All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people . . .
I would with such perfection govern, sir,
To excel the golden age.

This close parallelism [1] proves more for our purpose than the specific debt of Gonzalo's speech to Florio's version of Montaigne's chapter *des Cannibales*. It proves Shakespeare's acquaintance with Montaigne's essays ; his acquaintance with reflections on the sixteenth century, with the philosophy as well as the experience of his own times. We may recall from Chaucer's Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* his apology for plain-speaking and for neglect of precedence in persons : his departures, that is to say, from the conventions of the writers of *romans* ; and we may recall from a letter by Edmund Spenser his ambition to " overgo " Ariosto by a like innovation in the moral sphere. Both Chaucer and Spenser were impelled, as it would seem by some infection of the English blood, to seek a meaning in phenomena, and to point a moral as well as to tell a tale. Their knights were knightly, not only because they fulfilled the requirements of the code of chivalry, but because they were chivalrous men. Their new words corresponded to their old deeds. They were true to character as well as to type. Similarly, and by the same infection, Shakespeare's dramatic personages, whatever passion was their motive, were no mere automata

[1] It was first remarked by Edward Capell, *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare*, three vols., *c.* 1780. Montaigne's relations to Shakespeare have been copiously studied since that date, and the results are conveniently summarized in *Montaigne and Shakspere*, by (Rt. Hon.) John M. Robertson, London, 1897.

of passion, but, within the limits of their circumstances, were moral agents of their own destiny. The sixteenth century, maturing into the seventeenth, as Shakespeare's powers matured with increasing years, was not an easy age in which to live reflectively. François Rabelais, early in the century (he died in 1553) had not found it even a safe age. A profound scholar, a physician, and a natural philosopher, filled with enthusiasm for the new learning, he had to disguise his intellect, as the Marrano-Jews of Portugal disguised their Judaism, beneath a cloak of many colours. He was safer drunk than sober ; excess was less suspect than moderation, and the freedom of his thought was released on a flowing stream of free language, partly cultivated for the pleasure of its new suppleness in French, partly for the cover of its extravagance. Michel de Montaigne, later in the century (he was twenty years old when Rabelais died) found the age safer for contemplation, but still too turbulent for ease. Yet it was ease that Montaigne sought, in a country distracted by civil wars, and in a world, larger than any country, distracted by human injustice. He is called a sceptic, and the father of sceptics, in the line of ascent to the French Revolution. But his scepticism had a positive side. He doubted the artificialities of action, in order to affirm the necessity of thought. He questioned the idols of experience, in order to establish the truth of nature.

> " No science," he wrote at the close of his *Essais*, " is so hard and difficult as to know how to live this life well. . . . As for me then, I love my life and cherish it, such as it hath pleased God to grant it us. ' A wise man is a most eager and most earnest searcher of those things that are natural ' (Seneca). . . . I cheerfully and thankfully, and with a good heart, accept what nature hath created for me; and am therewith well pleased, and am proud of it. . . . Nature is a gentle guide; yet not more gentle than prudent and just.

'We must seek into the nature of things, and thoroughly see what she inwardly requires' (Cicero). I quest after her track; we have confounded her with artificial traces. . . . The quaint inscription, wherewith the Athenians honoured the coming of Pompey into their city agreeth well and is conformable to my meaning :—

So far a God thou mayst accounted be
As thou a Man doest reacknowledge me.

It is an absolute perfection, and as it were divine, for a man to know how to enjoy his being loyally. . . . Sit we upon the highest throne of the world, yet sit we upon our own tail."

Montaigne's confession of faith—the forerunner of many intimate confessions—might be annotated at length. We might point out how the hardest science—to know how to live this life well—was forbidden by the authority of the Church in the centuries prior to Montaigne's ; how the road to Dante's Paradise, for example, was strown with the wreckage of such scientists. We might point out, too, that the theory of the divine right of kings—Marlowe's Machiavellian doctrine—assorted ill with this equation between Pompey and the citizens of Athens. But more pertinently to Shakespeare's debt to the views which Montaigne represented, we may ask what would happen if this mood of ease, enjoyment, and self-expression should strike hard on a call to social action. How should the natural man decide which was reality, and which illusion ; which quixotism, and which true chivalry ? What if the fairway of Montaigne should encounter an occasion of Machiavelli, as in the stricken cry of Hamlet, overtaken by the " cursed spite " of times out of joint ?

How all occasions do inform against me. . . .
How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,

Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That for a fantasy and trick of fame [1]
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

Bloody thoughts, free thought; others' will, free will; authority, ease; Machiavelli, Montaigne: without multiplying parallelisms or making too much of chance resemblances, may we not say that the problem of public order and of the law of communities, which occupied the mind of Europe from Dante to Luther and beyond, was matched by the problem of personal liberty and of the law of the individual, leading political philosophy to shade into ethics and psychology? These problems were in the air in Shakespeare's day, particularly in his latter days, when English seamen, home from the Spanish chase, had measured the distance from earth to heaven and the relation between character and action. Shakespeare, says one of his German critics,[2] "was the first who displayed in operation the modern spirit of worldly knowledge." The claim to primacy is immaterial. Cervantes displayed the same spirit, when he evoked the signs of human progress out of the ruins of the medieval world. For this would seem to be the truth of the matter. The object of Renaissance writers, if a common object may be affirmed of aims starting from so many different points, was to equip men nurtured in the Middle Ages

[1] "We have confounded nature with artificial traces," Montaigne, *supra*.

[2] Eduard Vehse.

with an intellectual, a moral and a social outfit appropriate to the discoveries of Humanists, Reformers, and Explorers. Their dominant note was educational. They all had something to teach. In one grade, they wrote dictionaries and grammars. In another grade, they drew up curricula of studies. In yet another, they prepared translations: Amyot's French version of Plutarch's *Lives*, 1559, for example, was described by Montaigne as "our breviary", and formed the basis of Sir Thomas North's English version, which Shakespeare read and used. In another, again, they wrote guides to worldly conduct. But something more was wanted than inspired textbooks, if the lessons were to be transfused into human consciousness, and reproduced in daily human action. The new men and women had to be *seen*, under the ordeal of the new experience; they had to work out their destiny in the public eye. Not in Arcadia, Utopia, or Fairyland, where Sidney, More, and Spenser had followed older writers of romance for their scenes, and not in the dreamland with magic frontiers invented by the *Roman de la Rose*,[1] but in the living world at the end of the sixteenth century—protected only by the flimsy illusion of the irony of Cervantes, whose worshipful knight tilted at solid windmills, or the yet flimsier illusion of the Elizabethan stage, with its players surrounded by spectators, and its scenery painted on a cloth in the background. From this test the bare man could not escape. He could no longer retire from it into the shadows of his author's literary convention. He had to stand his trial in front of his peers, as, by a play within a play, the guilty king in *Hamlet* was to be tried by the representation of murder on the stage :—

> The play's the thing,
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

[1] See p. 15, above.

So Shakespeare caught the conscience of humanity. So, the lessons of the scholars and grammarians, many of whom, in the persecution of learning, had paid for their audacity with their lives, were taught by example, instead of precept, till the modern man replaced the medieval. The whole philosophy of the Renaissance is contained in Hamlet's apostrophe, which we quoted above, commencing " What a piece of work is a man ! " The Middle Ages had not exalted man. They had depressed him, and subordinated him to authority. Shakespeare's qualities of Humanism—nobility, infinitude, perfection, and the rest—were recommended in the Middle Ages as attributes, not of man, but of God. *In majorem Dei gloriam*, to the greater glory of God, medieval men were trained to subdue the promptings of human appetite and reason. Feudal manners were directed to a like end, and this moral and social scheme was reflected in the mirror of literature, down to Dante himself. Boccaccio, who has been called the escape from Dante, escaped from one illusion into another. He retired from the Plague at Florence into a sheltered garden, where, with a few congenial companions, he covered experience with fiction. His *Decameron* founded the modern novel on a revolt from medieval conduct. He and his company sought to forget the Plague, and the divine wrath with which it was deemed to be afflicting sinful Europe, by indulging the natural man. They insisted, two hundred years before Montaigne, on a loyal enjoyment of their being ; and, haply, though here, again, we exceed the bounds of literary study, their selfish refusal of the fate, to which meeker men opposed only prayer, marked the beginning of hygienic science. For sanitation is also a part of Humanism.

The mind of England was awake in Shakespeare's day, as it had been awake in Chaucer's before him.

By a happy coincidence it was interpreted, in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, by two writers successively free from what may be called writer's cramp—the cramp produced by too much thinking about writing. Thus, John Gower in the earlier century and Gabriel Harvey in the later were alike impeded by learning and tradition from receiving the full impressions of the new age. But Chaucer and Shakespeare, with genius surpassing talent, threw away the ballast which they could not carry, and rose securely through the buoyant air, Both alike had a period of apprenticeship : Chaucer, as translator of the *Romance of the Rose* : Shakespeare, as a poet of lyric love, in the sonnet-sequence, which, though it owes much to personal moods and tenses of emotion, is recognized more and more clearly as a set piece of French composition.[1] But both alike absorbed what others imitated, and Shakespeare, gathering impressions from every physical and mental contact, was alert particularly to the problems of human nature, or, more exactly, to the problem of nature subduing humanity to her slow perfection, thus dramatizing, in a dozen borrowed plots, the awful truth of Tennyson's perception :—

> So careful of the type she seems,
> So careless of the single life.

Writers about Shakespeare sometimes sin by forgetting the English poet in the adept to the mind of Europe. A corrective to such pedantry is supplied by the accumulated wisdom of Shakespeare's readers. They have taken him to their hearts almost as comprehensively as the Bible. There are sayings current on their lips, which, if suddenly challenged, they even refer to " Shakespeare or the Bible ". They do

[1] Similarly, Shakespeare passed through a period of Euphuism.

not pay the English poet this homage because of his Continental radiations. They do not admire, or cease to admire, his 146th sonnet, because, on Sir Sidney Lee's authority, "thought and expression in Shakespeare's sonnets reflect too often and too closely a French strain to justify the theory of fortuitous coincidence".[1] They do not admire, or cease to admire, Shakespeare's images of and reflections on death, because, on the authority of Mr J. M. Robertson, "the theme is one of Montaigne's favourites", and "it is difficult to doubt that Montaigne is for Shakespeare the source".[2] The English poet excelled his foreign models; he overwent them, in Spenser's phrase about Ariosto. "All the peaks soar," wrote Robert Browning,

> but one the rest excels; . . .
> He's for the morning;

and Matthew Arnold wrote of Shakespeare's mountain-splendour :—

> Others abide our question. Thou art free.
> We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
> Out-topping knowledge.

So, analysis ceases in enjoyment, and pedantry in awe. We give ourselves freely to the freedom which Shakespeare won from his base. The English poet is restored to us from his French sources and his German commentators—from Plutarch in Amyot and North; from Machiavelli, in Gentillet and Patericke; from Ovid, Seneca, and the seven stars of the French Pleiad; from Montaigne, in Florio; from the brothers Schlegel, and the rest. His critics restore him to his readers and his hearers, among whom his immortality is secure. His truest critics

[1] *The French Renaissance in England*, 255.
[2] *Montaigne and Shakspere*, 56, 52.

have been the actors and actresses, who have made their name in Shakespeare's parts.

The scale of this work is too small to admit illustrations of the poetry ; the plays themselves are available in every library, and, indeed, in every home. But a signal instance may be suggested (by contrast) of Shakespeare's power of characterization—of his equal command and facility in presenting the human spectacle at its lowest and its highest. We select from *The Tempest* the person of Caliban, described as "a savage and deformed slave", and from *Antony and Cleopatra* the title-person, Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. Take the entrance of Caliban, with his burden of wood, in Act ii, Scene 2 :—

> All the infections that the sun sucks up
> From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him
> By inch-meal a disease! His spirits hear me,
> And yet I needs must curse. But they'll nor pinch,
> Fright me with urchin-shows, pitch me i' the mire,
> Nor lead me, like a firebrand, in the dark
> Out of my way, unless he bid 'em: but
> For every trifle are they set upon me ;
> Sometimes like apes, that mow and chatter at me,
> And after bite me ; then like hedgehogs, which
> Lie tumbling in my barefoot way, and mount
> Their pricks at my footfall ; sometime am I
> All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues
> Do hiss me into madness.

What hate and fear in a narrow brain ! What visions of a limited dimension, so quickly satisfied in the drunken song,

> No more dams I'll make for fish ;
> Nor fetch in firing
> At requiring ;
> Nor scrape trencher, nor wash dish :
> 'Ban, 'Ban, Cacaliban
> Has a new master:—get a new man.
> Freedom, hey-day !

How rudimentary, and yet how expressive ; and what penury in the freedom that can be measured ! For take, next, the first words of the tragic lovers in Act i, Scene 1, of the other play :—

> Cleop.: If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
> Ant.: There's beggary in the love than can be reckon'd.
> Cleop.: I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.
> Ant.: Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.

Cleopatra was so far removed from the finite sameness at the other end of the human gamut, that, as Enobarbus declared of her :—

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety.

And she found her " new heaven " with Mark Antony, in the unsurpassable last scene of the drama :—

> Give me my robe, put on my crown ; I have
> Immortal longings in me. . . .
> Methinks I hear
> Antony call; I see him rouse himself
> To praise my noble act. . . . Husband, I come :
> Now to that name my courage proves my title !
> I am fire and air ; my other elements
> I give to baser life.[1]

Iras, her attendant, kissing her lips, dies first :—

> If she first meet the curled Antony,
> He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss
> Which is my heaven to have—

the " new heaven " of the bourn of mortal love. So she applies the asp to her own breast :—

> Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
> That sucks the nurse asleep ?

[1] Down to the lowest base in Caliban.

It is Caliban's "freedom, hey-day!" exalted to Cleopatra's capacity, and "those most marvellous words", says a modern poet, "are among the most beautiful things ever written by man."[1] So, the English poet is restored to his English readers.

[1] John Masefield, *William Shakespeare*, 207.

CHAPTER IV

The Bible

THE influence of the Bible, despite its long primacy as a classic of the English language, is properly to be ascribed to the foreign sources of English literature. Its books, which are Eastern in origin, were first written in Hebrew or Greek at times and by peoples of a different civilization from ours, and it was not till a comparatively late date in the history of the Christian Church that vernacular versions came into common use. So used, their literary influence was felt chiefly by prose-writers; and this unsealing of the Bible, as a source of literary inspiration, and even for patterns of common speech, was the boon of the Reformation to modern Europe, just as the discovery of the pagan classics had been the boon of the Renaissance.

How the Renaissance opened into the Reformation and the more positive spirit of the North turned the Italian revival of lay learning into the German investigation of the sacred Scriptures—how Luther succeeded Petrarch, to give it names, and Reuchlin's Hebrew grammar[1] supplemented the pagan studies of classical scholars in Italian city-states—is a commonplace

[1] Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522) had learned Greek in Rome and Paris. His Greek teacher in Italy sped him back to Germany with the words, *Ecce, Graecia nostro exsilio transvolavit Alpes.* At home in Saxony he learned Hebrew from a Jew, 1492, and published in 1506 his *Rudimenta Hebraica*, described in the *Cambridge Modern History* (ii, 696) as an " event which took the Old Testament out of the hand of phantasy and turned it into an instrument of reform ", i.e. of the Lutheran Reformation.

of history. It may be sought in the ordinary text-books, where the passage of the Renaissance into the Reformation can be followed to its conclusion, through laymen's criticism of the Bible, and their separation of politics from theology, to the wars of religion, and the territorial wars into which these led. Our business is with literature, not war ; with the mind of Europe in letters, not in treaties ; and the value of the Reformation in that sphere is, first, to be found in its provision of vernacular Bibles—Bibles in German, Dutch, English and other languages—saturating popular taste and the eager emulation of prose-writers alike with the magic of their diction, homely, stately, familiar, sublime, and with the intimate associations of their moral and spiritual appeal. For the Bible was old as well as new. It was old as an implement of authority, as a weapon of theology and ecclesiasticism, and as a treasury of devotion ; it was new in the use which was made of it by reformers of the sixteenth century, who built bridges between the cloister and the hearth. Thus, Erasmus,[1] the famous Dutch Latinist, when he translated, 1516, the New Testament from Greek into Latin, called it *Novum Instrumentum*, a new implement of thought and culture, and said of its contents in his Preface : " I long that the husbandman should sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plough, that the weaver should hum them to the tune of his shuttle, that the traveller should beguile with their stories the tedium of his journey." This was, in effect, a renovation as well as a translation of the Bible, a domestication of it as well as its release from the prohibiting bars of an unknown language ; and when the less strange Latin of Erasmus was changed again by Martin Luther in Germany, and

[1] Erasmus is the hero of Charles Reade's historical novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth*.

his successors beyond, into the daily, living tongues actually spoken by the countrymen of the translators, then the peoples of Europe at last were no longer estranged from the Bible. It emerged out of antiquity into the comfortable companionship of human life, as Cicero had emerged in Italy under the guidance of Petrarch; and, "as a mere literary monument, the English version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue, while its perpetual use made it from the instant of its appearance the standard of our language".[1]

"The standard of our language": a remarkable tribute to a foreign book, to a book naturalized in our country, much as Chaucer had naturalized the *Roman de la Rose*, or Malory the *Morte Darthur*. We recall how Edward Kirke wrote, in his commendation of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, that "our mother-tongue, which truly of itself is both full enough for prose and stately enough for verse, hath long time been counted most bare and barren of both", and how Spenser's *Faery Queen* filled up the vacuum in verse, enhancing its vocabulary and style, and enabling English poets to approach the problems of character and conduct explored so confidently by Shakespeare. We recall, too, that English literature owed these poetic resources chiefly to foreign exemplars, that those exemplars again owed them to models in antiquity, and that the first recourse to antiquity was taken in Italy, where native descendants of the Latin race had inherited its language and tradition. Still rehearsing what has gone before, we may note, that, so far as England is concerned, while it is not correct to say that there was no direct contact between English writers and classical antiquity, it is certainly true that, over the greater area, such contact was indirect. Chaucer's *Homer* and Malory's

[1] J. R. Green, *History of the English People*, bk. vii, ch. 1.

Virgil were derived from Italian and French versions. Spenser's epic examples were sought in modern Italy more consciously than in ancient Greece and Rome. Shakespeare's Plutarch was translated by Sir Thomas North from Amyot's French version of the original Greek. English playwrights "went to school with Seneca beneath the ferule of Italian ushers",[1] and Seneca's moral philosophy crossed to England through Montaigne. Ronsard's experiments and du Bellay's rules introduced Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey to the rhetoric of Aristotle and Horace. Every time, or almost every time, the foundations of English literature were laid abroad. "The standard of our language" was set by foreign measures.

The resultant literature had been chiefly made in verse. Prose translators were busy; there were prose scenes and speeches in Tudor plays: Lyly's *Euphues* and Sidney's *Arcadia* were written mainly in prose, and prose pamphlets and treatises were abundant. But the outstanding names were those of poets. The lyrical gift was so widely distributed that Tudor England has been called a nest of singing-birds. They all sang songs in those days: Ben Jonson, Walter Ralegh, Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon, even Queen Elizabeth herself.[2] And they all made metrical experiments—in blank verse, in sonnets, in stanzas—and disputed about the value of rhyme. But, meanwhile, despite some prose-writings, our mother-tongue, though "full enough for prose", was still bare and barren in that expression.

There were other causes for the backwardness of our prose literature besides the lack of a standardizing exemplar. Prose is really more difficult to write,

[1] See p. 59, n. 1.

[2] The first book of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* will supply ample evidence to this fact, which may be confirmed by consulting the song-books collected with rare skill by the Elizabethan scholar A. H. Bullen.

or, at any rate, to write with rhythm and regulation. Its paragraphs are not sliced by artificial pauses, such as the close of a couplet or of a stanza, and the diffuse pen of the prose-writer is not checked by such devices as metrical beats, recurring sounds, and the rest of the poet's technique. Prose, moreover, is often word-shy. The poet's license in admitting new words or in re-admitting older words to his vocabulary, is restricted, or seems to be restricted, in the more pedestrian region of prose. Further, and very significantly to the sixteenth century, when authority was still suspicious of the application of reason to dogma, prose-writers were more liable than poets to a conflict with authority, which might prove fatal. They could not so thoroughly wrap up their meaning in metaphor, or distil it through music, or otherwise disguise it in convenient ambiguities. So far as they used prose, they were well advised to clothe it in motley. It was many years later that the Royal Society, in the person of its first historian,[1] insisted on "a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness; bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can". This ideal prose-style, hardly attainable in 1660, would have been unwise or dangerous in the preceding century, when many topics were preserved from open handling, and prose-writers sought protection from those prohibitions either by usages false to their art or by even more elaborate precautions. Thus, the long reign of Latin prose in Europe was due partly to the excellence of the language and the breadth of its distribution, and partly (as still in physicians' prescriptions) to the greater safety which it afforded. Fiction, again, was an effective screen: meanings and even names might be hidden in the ambuscades of an Arcadia or on a

[1] Bishop Thomas Sprat (1635–1713).

Utopia's imaginary shores. Thus, the life of Rabelais, as remarked in the last chapter, helps to explain his allusive style. Seeking shelter physically from persecution at the court of Francis I, the Humanist King of France, or at that of his brilliant sister, Queen Margaret of Navarre,[1] he sought equivocal expression by shifts and subterfuges of style, and changed his topic as often as his address. He wore motley, and never settled down. He was serious about things ludicrous, and derisive about serious things. As he fled nimbly from authority, sometimes doubling on his way, he might have cried against the pursuing terror, in the words of a modern poet :—

> I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
> Of my own mind, and in the mist of tears
> I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

Particularly under running laughter. For the brave, eager spirit of Rabelais, exploring the secrets of sensation in defiance of the prohibitions of the Church, declared on the fly-leaf of his book, *le rire est le propre de l'homme*. As he explored, he laughed : a little shamefacedly at first when he fingered with a physician's curiosity the old, lewd, forbidden things ; then more and more carelessly and loudly, as the wonders of creation were revealed, and the joy of possession was unveiled, and man entered into his inheritance, and the sun of the Renaissance rose on the revival of human learning.

But his style in prose was not directly helpful. Its cryptic ways, its coarseness, its satire, its cultivated exuberance and inconsequences, while they enlarged the vocabulary and increased the expressiveness of French prose, deterred extensive imitation. Montaigne and Molière were indebted to him ; Ben Jonson a

[1] 1492–1549 ; she put her name to, and may have written, the tales of the *Heptameron*.

little, Shakespeare less, Thomas Nashe (1567–1601), novelist and pamphleteer, most clearly in that age. Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1635), Samuel Butler's satiric *Hudibras* (1663–68), and, above all, a century later, Laurence Sterne's novel, *Tristram Shandy* (1760–7), are more direct in the succession, though they vary in their degree of Rabelaisianism. But, significant as he is, even in the writings of Sir Walter Scott, he is not a maker of English prose. He did not supply the missing "standard of our language".

We come closer to the setting of that standard—closer than Rabelais, Montaigne, and Amyot, transmitting Plutarch to North—in the works of the French reformer, Jean Chauvin, commonly known as Calvin, who was born in 1509, and who died in 1564. The dates invite expatiation. In Calvin's birth-year, Reuchlin in Saxony was paying the price of his Hebrew studies in the wrath of obscurantists, who sought the ear of the Emperor Maximilian for their suspicion of the defender of Jewish books. Erasmus was staying in England as the honoured guest of Sir Thomas More—"has Nature ever moulded anything gentler, pleasanter, or happier than the mind of More?" he wrote in one of his humane letters—and the third in a triumvirate of the New Learning, since famous as the Oxford Reformers,[1] was John Colet, Dean of St Paul's, who founded in 1509 his great school in the shadow of his cathedral. Castiglione was writing his *Cortegiano*, Machiavelli was forty years of age, and Ariosto at Ferrara was writing his *Orlando Furioso*, in which Spenser, eighty years after, was to discover the "ensample of a good governour and a vertuous man". A great year, 1509, when Calvin was born

[1] The title of a book by Frederic Seebohm, 1867; frequently reprinted.

at Noyon in Picardy, and a great year, 1564, when Shakespeare was born, and Calvin's busy life in a busy age was closed at Geneva. His epoch, 1509–64, seemed to be reserved for the gifts he had in keeping, and we learn without surprise that this French reformer in Switzerland, who founded a school of religious thought, became "to a large degree the doctrinal oracle of the Elizabethan people", and that "the technical language of his creed was absorbed by popular English speech".[1]

The language thus absorbed by English speech—the standard set for English prose—was the technical language of the creed expounded in the *Institution Chrétienne*, or "Institutes of the Christian Religion", which Calvin wrote first in Latin (1535) and afterwards in his native French. An English version by Thomas Norton, "translated according to the Author's last edition", was published in 1561, and it is significant of the times that Arthur Golding, Sir Philip Sidney's friend, and the translator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,[2] likewise rendered into admirable English a selection of Calvin's sermons. Verse and prose come very close together in this record of Calvin in England, and the "Preface to the French King" (Francis I), which Norton retained in his version of the *Institution*, serves to remind us of our literary debt to France, in prose no less than in verse.

And, through France, as always, to antiquity. But this time antiquity includes Hebrew as well as Greek and Latin, the Bible as well as the pagan classics. Calvin was second to none in his devotion to Latinity. Like Montaigne, and other illustrious Frenchmen, he was a true son of the Roman mother. But the Latin language, in which he first wrote his French book, was not the whole of the "technical language"

[1] Sir Sidney Lee, *French Renaissance in England*, 147.

[2] 1565–7. Shakespeare used Golding's version.

which "was absorbed by popular English speech". Recollect the subject of Calvin's book. He was writing about the "Institutes of Christianity", and whence should he take them but from the reformers' Bibles, newly translated into modern tongues? Other "Institutes" had been discussed before him. Machiavelli in his *Principe* had discussed the Institutes of the State, and Castiglione in his *Cortegiano* had discussed the Institutes of the Court. But Calvin extended his inquiry beyond secular government and worldly manners. He was born into the age when the freedom of the Bible was becoming effective, an age as responsive to the spirit which was thus unlocked as Petrarch had been to the released genius of Cicero. Writing of that earlier epoch, Sir Richard Jebb, a modern Humanist, tells us :—

> The revival which dates from Petrarch was, in a very definite sense, the beginning of a new era. Ancient literature was welcomed, not only as supplying standards of form, but as disclosing a new conception of life; a conception freer, larger, more rational, and more joyous than the medieval; one which gave unfettered scope to the play of the human feelings, to the sense of beauty, and to all the activities of the intellect. . . . He (Petrarch) . . . advocated the study of the classics as the key to a larger mental life . . . one which should educate and exercise men's highest faculties.[1]

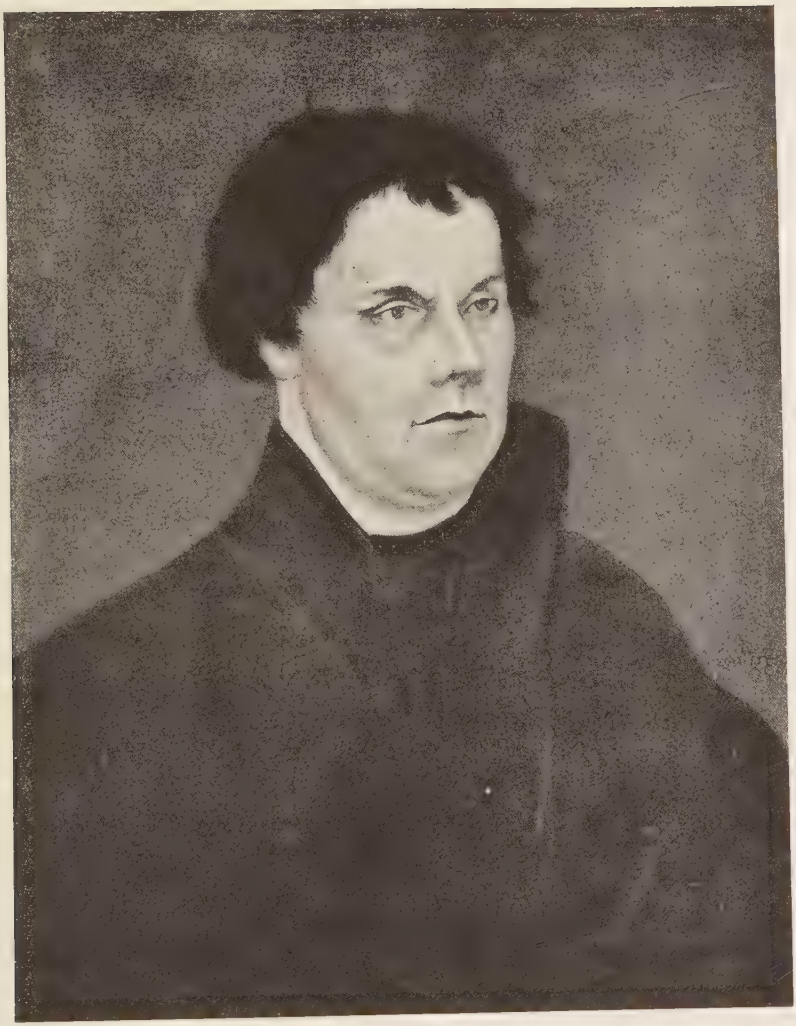
Mutatis mutandis, precisely the same is true of the release of the Bible two hundred years afterwards. "The paramount task," we read on the same authority, "which the New Learning found in Germany was the elucidation of the Bible," and it was pursued on the same lines, with the same enthusiasm, and with the same sense of exhilaration. The revival which dates from Martin Luther was likewise the beginning of a new era. The vernacular Bible was likewise welcomed, not only as supplying standards of form,

[1] *Cambridge Modern History*, I, xvi.

but as disclosing a new conception of life. The study of the Bible was advocated, by Erasmus and the rest, as the key to a larger life, which should educate and exercise men's highest faculties.

It is essential to keep this parallelism in mind. Classical and Christian Humanism, or the revival of pagan and sacred learning, are successive aspects of one movement, two facets of one jewel, which all Europe wore in the sixteenth century. The Renaissance had many departments : art, music, scholarship, invention, navigation, astronomy, etc. ; and the Reformation, its Northern sequel, by extracting politics from theology, led to religious and territorial wars. But the so-called Humanism, out of which both arose, in humane, or worldly, as opposed to other-worldly, studies—in the claim, that is to say, of free men " to think, feel, and act for themselves, and to abide by the logic of results " [1]—was single in its diverse manifestations. It was a sense of release (not necessarily amounting to a revolt) from blind obedience to authority and unquestioning acquiescence in inhibitions. It was a contact with fresh springs of conduct, till then withheld or imperfectly known. For note that, though the full knowledge was greeted as a kind of revelation, a partial knowledge had gone before it, and accelerated the spread of Humanism, in each epoch of its activity. Homer, for example, was not unknown when Boccaccio employed a dull scribe to read Greek with Petrarch and himself,[2] but he was known imperfectly and inadequately. " I have not been so fortunate as to learn Greek," Petrarch wrote in an imaginary letter *To Homer*, and so Reuchlin might have written " I have not been so fortunate as to learn Hebrew ". And each scholar, in his own time, in the fourteenth as in the sixteenth

[1] G. Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 191.
[2] See p. 6.



LUTHER

Luther created the German language as an instrument of literature—FROUDE

[*face p. 96*

century, took a practical step to supply the lack, Petrarch repairing to a Grecian, and Reuchlin to a Jewish teacher. No, the New Learning was not a sudden thing, either in Italy or Germany : a sudden light might have burned less brightly ; but the freedom of the classics and the Bible came to men who knew what they wanted, and who, claiming it as an overdue right, seized it with a certain fierce joy. Even the excesses of Ciceronians, which Erasmus was moved to rebuke, expressed a sense of possession which was keener because it had been repressed ; and the Reformation might not have led to war if the Bible had always been fully opened. For, to quote Erasmus again, from his Preface to the *Novum Instrumentum* : " The mysteries of Kings it may be safer to conceal, but Christ wished his mysteries to be published as openly as possible ".[1]

An open Bible, then, was the sign of the Reformation, as a Greek lexicon, inaccessible to Petrarch, was the sign of the Renaissance ; and the Bible, like Homer, was moved out of obscurity into light. Obscure men resisted its removal. A famous satire of the second decade of the sixteenth century, when Calvin was a little boy at Noyon, is called simply " Letters of Obscure Men " (*Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*), and was written by a group of young reformers at the Saxon University of Erfurt in Reuchlin's defence against the monks. A year or two later the fun had turned to earnest, and Luther was arraigned before the Holy Roman Empire at Worms. But despite the little men and the big men, despite Reuchlin's monks and Luther's Pope himself, the course of the Reformation could not be turned. It made its way irresistibly in Calvin's lifetime.[2]

[1] On Shakespeare's way with Machiavelli's " mysteries of Kings ", see Chapter III, above.

[2] " During these years, Calvin gradually grew to the height of

The Bible was opened to the nations ; and " England ", in J. R. Green's words, " became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible."

Where was the Bible before it was written, before it was written in languages which could be understood ? Passing over the Greek version by the Septuagint, or the seventy-two Hebrew scholars who were sent from Jerusalem to Alexandria in the third century B.C., we come down to the Latin Vulgate version chiefly effected by St Jerome and completed about A.D. 400. This *was* the Bible of the Middle Ages, and it is important to observe, and an office of piety to remember, in calculating the debt of English literature to foreign sources, that the Latin language of the Vulgate Bible, written more than fifteen hundred years ago, is the parent tongue of Europe's Romance-languages, the true origin of our religious or spiritual speech, and that the Authorized Version of the Bible, to which we shall presently come, and which is so deeply sown in the English language, was immensely indebted to the Vulgate. Greek and Hebrew, as we have seen, were dead languages in Europe for many centuries : they were not only dead, but buried, by the keepers of the " mysteries " of theology. Petrarch could not read Greek, nor Reuchlin Hebrew, we remember ; and " I go to awaken the dead " was the just claim of an Italian antiquary, Ciriaco of Ancona, in the early fifteenth century. But while the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures were thus twice hidden from lay students for a millennium or more, " the Latin

a commanding figure in Europe. He is the only one of the great Reformers who can justly be called international. . . . Calvinism . . . was the form of faith in which the Dutch Republic was sustained, and the American Republic was founded ; . . . which formed the royal intellect of Cromwell, and inspired the majestic verse of Milton." —*The Reformation in the Sixteenth Century in its Relation to Modern Thought and Knowledge*. By Charles Beard, LL.D., with Introduction by Ernest Barker, D.Litt., London, 1927 ; pp. 244, 261.

Scriptures and the literature based on them remained through all that time the common possession of every scholar in Europe ".[1]

And they transmitted their magic into every country—into England directly through John Wiclif, whose English rendering of the Vulgate, as revised by Charlemagne in A.D. 802, was published in the fourteenth century. Wiclif was Master of Balliol, when ardent youths from the boroughs and abroad were planting the flag of the New Learning in Oxford, and his Biblical studies, fearlessly pursued, spread the doctrines of reform a century prior to the Reformation. A great popularizer of knowledge, Wiclif earned, as was inevitable, great unpopularity in his own day. Even his bones were not suffered to rest in peace. But he lives in history as the first author of an English Bible. Less directly, the Vulgate passed into English speech through the poems of the writer known as William Langland (*c.* 1330–*c.* 1400), whose *Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*—Piers being Peter, or the Church, starting in the character of the just man, and allegorized gradually into Christ—is the spiritual or religious counterpart to Chaucer's contemporary lay pictures, reflecting English life in Wiclif's century.[2]

[1] See *A Grammar of the Vulgate*: *being an Introduction to the Study of the Latinity of The Vulgate Bible*. By W. E. Slater and H. J. Whyte. Oxford, 1926. The introductory pages at least should be consulted.

[2] The best book to consult, outside the works of Chaucer, Langland, Wiclif, and their contemporaries, is *National Life and Character in the Mirror of Early English Literature*, by Edmund Dale, M.A., D.Litt., Cambridge, 1907. See especially pp. 278 sqq.: " Never before have we had so many poets to satirize the stains upon the garment of humanity; which does not necessarily prove that the stains are deeper, but certainly suggests that the poets are more moral. . . . As in Chaucer's pages we have the life of the people portrayed, so in Langland's we have the ripening conscience. In Chaucer, we see the

Thus, the age of the revival of Hebrew studies, the age when the heirs of Petrarch and his fellow-Humanists, though still liable to dire penalties, greatly dared to apply the New Learning to the sacred books, found the nations ready to read the Bible and to absorb its diction into their own. Reform came with a noteworthy simultaneousness : it was not only in England that there had been reformers before the Reformation,[1]—ardent students of Hebrew and Greek, sowing seeds of the red flower of war. Martin Luther in Germany, Lefèvre d'Etaples and Pierre Olivetan (a cousin of Calvin) in France, Antonio de Lebrixa and Cardinal Ximenez in Spain, Philip von Marnix and the great Erasmus in the Netherlands, were among the scholars, critics, and translators, who, in varying degrees of nearness to reformers' ideas, may be counted as Biblical extensionists. When their labours were completed, about the middle of the sixteenth century, the original texts of Holy Scripture were no longer hidden books. And to their labours must be added those of the gallant band of hymn-writers and psalm-singers, who, at grave peril of liberty or life, turned the courage and consolation of the Hebrew Psalter into rousing, musical, native verse. Luther himself and Calvin were among them, and they included many well-known Lutherans and

world as a man of the world actually saw it; in Langland, we see it as it appeared to the earnest reformer. . . . Destructive criticism must always precede the age of new construction. We see him in the tall, gaunt figure of Langland, passing through the jostling crowds of London streets to pray for rich men's souls, and yet living his life in a world apart, a world of ideals of what ought to be, where even theology, as then understood, is a vain help. He stands the harbinger of the Reformation to come."

[1] Karl Ullman wrote (1841) *Reformers before the Reformation, chiefly in Germany and the Netherlands*; E.T., 1855, and since reprinted.

Calvinists, Huguenots, Protestants and others, whose names form a martyrology of faith.[1]

So the Hebrew and Greek Bible was brought to England, and became a classic book of the English language. The first successors to Wiclif in England, or in the Protestant centres to which English scholars fled from proscription at home, were William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale, whose "Great Bible" was printed in Paris, 1538–9.[2] The "Breeches Bible" of 1560 was the work of reformers in Geneva, and was so called from its translation of Genesis iii, 7, "they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves breeches"[3]; and the "Bishops' Bible", 1568, was prepared by twelve Bishops, under the direction of Matthew Parker, Queen Elizabeth's Archbishop of Canterbury. Less than half a century later came the "Authorized Version" of 1611. From first to last, it was the task of a hundred years: Reuchlin's Hebrew grammar, we remember, which was driven like a pier into the sands of fanciful, fashionable mysticism, had been written in 1506, and Calvin's *Institution Chrétienne* first appeared in 1535.

Where shall we find the Bible *after* it was written in the languages in which it could be understood? Hitherto—till the Bible, that is to say, had been absorbed into the English mind and speech—its direct influence on style had been derived chiefly

[1] See *The Psalms in Human Life*, by Lord Ernle: "With the Psalms is bound up the history of French Protestantism. Their translation into verse and their setting to music were the chief works of the Reformation in the Low Countries."

[2] Professor A. W. Pollard writes of Tyndale's work: "It fixed the style and tone of the English Bible, and supplied not merely the basis of all subsequent Protestant renderings of the books on which he laboured, but their very substance and body, so that their subsequent versions must be looked upon as revisions of his, not as independent translations" (*Records of the English Bible*, 1911).

[3] Wiclif had used the same quaint phrase.

from the Book of Proverbs. Corroboration of this statement may be sought in what Sir Thomas Elyot, an English scholar, who served as Ambassador to the Emperor Charles V, wrote in 1534, in presenting his translation of *The Doctrine of Princes* from the Greek of the orator, Isocrates. "This little book is to be compared," he said, "in counsel and short sentence with any book, Holy Scripture excepted"; and the comparative superiority of Holy Scripture over Isocrates lay precisely in the "short sentence" (or sententiousness) of *Proverbs*. Wiclif's version, which was available for English Renaissance prose-writers, contains whole paragraphs written in the antithetical short sentences, which powerfully attracted John Lyly, author of *Euphues*, and formed a prominent feature of the euphuistic style which he enhanced. But the direct study of the vernacular Bible, which made such rapid advance in the sixteenth century, brought other imitable features into prominence besides the antitheses of *Proverbs* and, more generally, the parallelism of Hebrew poetry. It brought a prose-style, consummated in the Authorized Version (1611), by virtue of the versions which went before it, and available for other writings than Biblical translations. The technical language of his creed, we read of Calvin, was absorbed by popular English speech; and the pervasion of the English mind with the style and diction of the Bible helped to supply the standard for prose—for the construction of sentences and paragraphs, and for the effective use of homely and stately words—which till then had been missing.

We may submit just one or two examples. Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, is chiefly famous as Ridley's companion at the stake in 1555, and for his protest under that ordeal, "we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be extinguished." The candle is alight to-day, and if we turn,

for instance, to Latimer's 35th sermon we shall discover the source of the light which he shed, too, on English style. "The Devil is never idle," he declared. "Where the devil is resident" there

> down with Christ's cross, up with purgatory pick-purse, up with popish purgatory, I mean. Away with clothing the naked, the poor and impotent, up with decking of images, and gay garnishing of stocks and stones; up with man's traditions and his laws, down with God's will and His most holy word. Down with the old honour due unto God, and up with the new god's honour. Let all things be done in Latin: there must be nothing but Latin, not so much as, "Remember man that thou art ashes, and into ashes shalt thou return."

Surely an effective piece of rhetoric, and, surely, much of it new in English prose in the sixteenth century. The classical figures of alliteration and antithesis are there, but there is more than these; more even than the Biblical phrases, such as "clothing the naked" and "stocks and stones". There is a suffusion of the whole paragraph with the Bible, culminating in a verse from the Psalms, which is turned to rarely effective use by a combination of the simplest words, in the very spirit of Holy Writ. *Latin*, *things*, *nothing*, *not*, *done*, *all*, with the emphasis thrown on *Latin* by the structure of the sentence, and the contrast suggested between the *all things* of the Latinizers and the least thing of the Psalmist, which is the greatest thing of all. It is good, nervous English prose, expressing a high imagination, a noble purpose, and a vivid scorn, and, early though its date in the century of Luther and Calvin, it is plainly inspired by Bible-studies.

Take, next, the "judicious" Richard Hooker, who died in 1600, at the end of Luther's century, and whose *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* were published, 1594–7. We are not concerned with the argument

of that work, but with the manner of the argument, and with the progress which English prose has made after the example of Calvin and his teachers. "If anything desirable may be infinite," Hooker wrote in one place, "there must needs be the highest of all things that are desired. No good is infinite but only God, therefore he is our felicity and bliss." We note here, as a negative feature, but a very important one in writers after Lyly, the complete absence of strain : the limpidity, or running quality, of the style, with each word falling lightly in its place. "We needs must love the highest when we see it," wrote Tennyson, master of English style, in a line of blank verse in the nineteenth century, and the same perfectness of diction was reached in prose three hundred years before. Indeed, Hooker's mastery of prose-rhythm may be deemed the greater perfection of the two. Lastly, take the conclusion to the Fourth Book of his *Laws* :—

> Heaven itself hath by this hand sustained them, no aid or help having thereunto been ministered for performance of the work of reformation, other than such kind of help or aid as the angel in the prophet Zechariah speaketh of, saying: "Neither by an army nor strength, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Which grace and favour of divine assistance having not in one thing or two showed itself, nor for some few days or years appeared, but in such sorts so long continued, our manifold sins and transgressions striving to the contrary : what can we less thereupon conclude, than that God would at leastwise by tract of time teach the world that the thing which He blesseth, defendeth, keepeth, so strangely cannot choose but be of Him ? Wherefore, if any refuse to believe us, disputing for the verity of religion established, let them believe God himself thus miraculously working for it, and wish life even for ever and ever unto that glorious and sacred instrument whereby He worketh.

Contrast with the flowing music of the above passage any passage taken at random from Lyly's *Anatomy of Wit*, which was published in the same epoch, 1579 :—

> Seeing therefore that the very blossom of love is sour, the bud cannot be sweet. In time prevent danger, lest untimely thou run into a thousand perils. Search the wound while it is green, too late cometh the salve when the sore festereth, and the medicine bringeth double care, when the malady is past cure. Beware of delays. The slender twig groweth to a stately tree, and that which with the hand might easily have been pulled up will hardly with the axe be hewen down. The least spark, if it be not quenched, will burst into a flame, the least moth in time eateth the thickest cloth. . . .

and so on. There is plainly a difference in the degree of ease with which Lyly and Hooker manipulate their material of words, images, figures, and rhythm. Lyly is more conscious of the burden of them. He does not subordinate them to his design. His *twigs*, *sparks*, and *moths* retain their separate individuality, and are not introduced as metaphors—not metamorphosed, like Hooker's *sins striving to the contrary*, his God *keeping so strangely* his creatures, and working by a *glorious and sacred instrument*. So, again, Lyly's *care* and *cure*, *moth* and *cloth*, *in time* and *untimely*, etc., are newer, more jejune, and less artistic, despite the obvious presence of artifice, than Hooker's command of emphasis by repeating a sound or idea, in *not in one thing or two . . . nor for some few days or years . . . but in such sorts so long continued*, his *believers . . . believe God himself*, and other devices of style which conceal the art that invents them. Between Lyly and Hooker, between an English-prose style still wearing the marks of its pagan origin and a style native to its soil, is interposed the intimate study of that English Bible, which Tyndale inherited from Wiclif and handed

on to the Authorized translators. And the technical language of Tyndale's creed was Calvin's boon to serious writers.

English prose in the age of Elizabeth recovered grandly from the effects of the double temptation to which Lyly and Sidney had exposed it in their romances of *Euphues* and *Arcadia*. Francis Bacon (1561–1626), for example, though he affected to despise his English writings, has regretted in vain that his *Essays* were not composed, like his philosophical works, in Latin. Posterity does not share his regret. The great lawyer's extension of learning, and the triumph which he won for the direct method of inductive reasoning, determine his place in the European Renaissance ; but the tentative notes for the Latin works—the *Novum Organum* and others—in which his conclusions were presented, were written in his native language, so that the road which he followed to that place led to a development of style in English prose. Those notes are incorporated in his *Essays*. They deal with a variety of topics, subsidiary to his main design, and eloquent of his wide curiosity. Most of them possess a moral interest, and a part of Bacon's attitude towards conduct, in its relation to worldly success, he owed to, or shared with, Machiavelli. But the difference of a century in their ages helped to endow the younger writer with a richer and more expressive vocabulary than Machiavelli had commanded. Bacon's aphorisms are not merely rhetorical epigrams, with the external glitter of hard cleverness : they are warm with feeling and quick with reflection, as we should expect from the contemporary of Spenser and Shakespeare.

God Almighty first planted a Garden. And, indeed, *it is the purest of human pleasures.*

Men fear Death, *as children fear to go in the dark.*

He that hath wife and children hath given *hostages to fortune.*

All rising to great place is *by a winding stair.*

If a man watch too long, *it is odds he will fall asleep.*

Suspicions amongst thoughts are like Bats amongst Birds; *they ever fly by twilight.*

These sentences from Bacon's English *Essays*—and they might be multiplied many times over—display, in the phrases which we have italicized, a colour which is temperamental rather than picturesque. It is not a matter of brushwork, but of brain-work. The style has been ripened by a humanity which is not discerned in such passages from the same *Essays* as the following :—

There is no question but a just fear of an imminent danger, though there be no blow given, is a lawful Cause of a War.

Surely Princes had need, in tender matters and ticklish times, to beware what they say.

Men of noble birth are noted to be envious towards New Men, when they rise.

In the three last examples, there are a power of observation and a terse wisdom in commentary, which may be matched out of many maxim-makers, but there is not the vision—the subjective power of transmuting the thing seen into the thing re-seen, or reflected through the mirror of the mind—which is characteristic of Renaissance thought at its zenith, and which the six former examples serve to illustrate. Bacon, too, refined his style in prose by the models set in the English Bible, which he learned at the knees of his mother, Lady (Nicholas) Bacon, wife of the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and sister-in-law to Lord Burghley, the Prime Minister. Lady Bacon, a typical Renaissance woman in respect to her Greek and Latin learning, was likewise a devout Calvinist

of a particularly narrow type. Francis resembled her in features and intellect, and, though the self-righteousness of her character did not descend to him as a call to the religious life, it may be traced in his imperception to certain values and exclusiveness of moral outlook, which finally wrecked the worldly career of the great philosopher of the Renaissance in England.

Dr S. H. Butcher[1] has said, that " henceforth it is in the confluence of the Hellenic stream of thought with the waters that flow from Hebrew sources that the main direction of the world's progress is to be sought. The two tendencies summed up in the words Hebraism and Hellenism are often regarded as opposing and irreconcilable forces. . . . Yet harmonized they can and must be. How to do so is one of the problems of modern civilization—how we are to unite the dominant Hebrew idea of a divine law of righteousness and of a supreme spiritual faculty with the Hellenic conception of human energies, manifold and expansive, each of which claims for itself unimpeded play ; . . . how, in a word, Religion may be combined with Culture." It was the same problem, it may be recalled, which, a little earlier in the nineteenth century, had led Matthew Arnold,[2] the critic-moralist, to distinguish repeatedly between our reactions to the Greek and Hebrew in our

[1] 1850–1910 ; an eminent Hellenist. The quotation is from his *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius.*

[2] 1822–88. Reference may be made to *Literature and Dogma*, *Culture and Anarchy*, and parts of *Celtic Literature*, in which Arnold enounced the formula : " While the *Golden Treasury* is a monument of a nation's strength, the *Book of Praise* is a monument of a nation's weakness." Another interesting reference will be found in Arnold's essay on Heine, who " had in him both the spirit of Greece and the spirit of Judæa ; both these spirits reach the infinite, which is the true goal of all poetry and all art—the Greek spirit by beauty, the Hebrew spirit by sublimity."

consciousness, and to beg a " Philistine " generation to cultivate more " sweetness and light ".

But, despite these grave and learned warnings, it is open to question if the streams of Hellenism and Hebraism have flowed so separately through English thought and its expression as Butcher and Arnold suggest. Both founts were unsealed in the sixteenth century, and, though " the two tendencies summed up in the words " are separable by analysis, their separation in use is not so clear. To differentiate the Greek spirit by its cult of " beauty ", and the Hebrew by its cult of " sublimity ", is a fairly easy exercise in criticism, but it does not deprive the Book of Ruth of its beauty nor the plays of Æschylus of their sublimity. Rhetoric is the grammar of literature, and, just as the use of words is not always strictly in accord with grammarians' rules, so, too, rhetoricians' categories may be lost on the tide of a book. Hellenism and Hebraism, at any rate, to keep more strictly to our point, which were released with such noble pains by the pioneers of Humanism, South and North, were not separate in the poetry of John Milton (1608–74), to whom we shall presently come, and who was eight years old when Shakespeare died. For England's conquest of and by the Bible was consummated in a very few years—too few to interrupt her conquest of and by the classics of Greece and Rome.

Before coming to Milton, however, we may fitly close this chapter on the Bible by a consideration of John Bunyan,[1] whose *Pilgrim's Progress*, 1670

[1] 1628–88. Bunyan wrote *Grace Abounding*, 1666; *The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that which is to come*, Part I, 1678; Part II, 1684; *Life and Death of Mr Badman*, 1680, and other works. He was a Bedfordshire tinker, the son of a journeyman brazier, and spent twelve years after the Restoration in the county gaol for his unlicensed preaching. His *magnum opus*, written in prison,

(published 1678), was a direct product of the Authorized Version of 1611. Its devices of allegory and dream belong to the literary conventions of the Middle Ages. The *Pilgrim's Progress* opens with the words : "As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep ; and as I slept I dreamed a dream" ; and a dream was likewise the beginning of the French *Romance of the Rose*, a part of which Chaucer translated, and of the English *Vision of Piers the Plowman* in the Malvern Hills. Medieval, too, and of romantic provenance, are the personified abstractions, with which the old garden of the Rose was filled, and which crowd the road of Christian's pilgrimage. But Bunyan's abstractions are vitalized into living characters, as genuine as Chaucer's men and women, and with much of their vigour and freshness ; and not medieval, but intensely modern, in the Puritan England of Bunyan's day, was his way with the language of Bible. He just spoke it, and so he formed his style. In the words of the historian of the English people,[1] Bunyan's language "is the simplest and homeliest English which has ever been used by any great English writer ; but it is the English of the Bible. So completely has the Bible become Bunyan's life that one feels its phrases as the natural expression of his thoughts. He has lived in the Bible till its words have become his own."

"The homeliest English . . . of the Bible." "Its words became his own." We tend to repeat these phrases without pondering their meaning—without fully realizing what they meant in the history of the

was translated into Dutch and French in 1682, and into German in 1694, where the heirs of the Reformation, whence it sprang, received it as a native book. Its popularity in all countries is comparable with that of Shakespeare's plays.

[1] J. R. Green, *History of the English People*, bk. III, ch. ii.

sixteenth century, between the date of Reuchlin's Hebrew Grammar in 1506 and the Authorized Version in 1611. The Bible was domesticated in England and its language became our own, because heirs of the Renaissance across the Alps extended to the hidden treasures of Holy Writ the ardent curiosity and scholarship which had restored humane learning to Italy. The dream-romance of the *Pilgrim's Progress* was in form and language ultimately of Latin descent. It is established that a fragment of Cicero's *de Republica*, known as "The Dream of Scipio" (*Somnium Scipionis*), became, in a commentary by Macrobius, a Latin grammarian of about A.D. 400, the starting-point of the Dream-opening, which was a favourite convention of medieval poets; and it is established that the first of the Humanists sharpened his native speech on a Latin file. For Petrarch, seeking humane modes of language, government, and the conduct of life, cultivated Cicero as his chief joy, so much so that the Renaissance itself, which followed Petrarch's impulsion, has been called "the work of Cicero's spirit"[1]; and out of the Renaissance proceeded the Reformation, its Northern analogue and complement. So, "the simplest and homeliest English ever used by any great English writer" must be referred, in the last resort, to the Latin mother of modern Europe—

genus unde Latinum,
Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae—

those ancient Kings of high-walled Rome ("Rome la grant", including Greece), with whose dynasty, as observed in our first chapter, the early historians of England sought, with deep significance, to link up the line of British kings.

[1] See *English Literature and the Classics* ("Ciceronianism" by A. C. Clark), Oxford, 1912.

The Bible came home to England. It came from the Hebrews of old, laden with the associations of a civilization remote from Western and modern thought, and filled with fossilized remains reaching back almost to savagery. To the Hebrew books of the Old Testament were added the Greek books of the New, till the Bible comprised in all as many as sixty-six books written over several thousand years by authors of various occupations. It has been edited within our knowledge from the fourth century B.C., which is the date of the Septuagint Version, till the English Revised Version of A.D. 1881–5. The Latin Vulgate of the Roman Church was completed about A.D. 404 from Hebrew and Greek manuscripts by the pious labours of St Jerome, and became "the Bible" of a thousand years of religious life. But it was not the intimate Book of daily life, and there is a symbolism in the fact that a copy of the Bible was *chained* to the pulpit or the reading-desk. Gradually, however, towards the close of that millennium and more rapidly after the dawn of the sixteenth century, scholars, elucidating the texts, after first recovering the manuscripts, of Greek and Latin writers, dimly half-known through a screen of perversion[1] in the Dark Ages, applied their critical method to the sacred writings. Their curiosity was accounted a desecration, and the penalty often was severe. A mild instance was that of Lorenzo Valla,[2] a notable Italian humanist, who wrote notes on the original text of the New Testament, and criticized the temporal principality of the Pope in a declamation against the Donation of Constantine. For this treatise, dated 1440, Valla earned even more than his fair share of the wrath of Pope Eugenius IV, though, when Nicholas II succeeded to the Holy See, the scholar's

[1] See Appendix IV.

[2] 1407–57.

gifts were recognized by his appointment as Professor of Rhetoric at the Papal Court ; and we mention his name in this place in order to show, first, how late was Biblical criticism, and, secondly, how precarious was its path. Still, it made its way, as we have seen, against the intrenchments of authority and the weapons of persecution, and the great names of Luther, More, Erasmus, crown the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. By their labours, the Bible, the authentic Bible, was translated into every language and transfused into the life-blood of every people. The husbandman sang it as he followed the plough, the weaver hummed it to the tune of his shuttle, and the traveller beguiled with its stories the tedium of his journey. There were places, of course, where the Bible became a burden. The Calvinist Sunday was sometimes a day of gloom, and there were Protestant households in which the children feared God more than they loved Him. But the sweet temper of Bunyan in the *Pilgrim's Progress* adjusts, while it illuminates, the influence of the Bible in daily life, and it took its unassailable rank among the potent makers of modern literature. The music of the Psalter wound its way into the lyric verse of mystical poets, such as George Herbert (1593–1633) and Richard Crashaw (1612–49); it tempered the eroticism of Robert Herrick (1591–1674), and turned his muse to " Noble Numbers ". The study of the Bible inspired scholars as industrious as Bishop Lowth, whose *Lectures on Hebrew Poetry* were published in 1753, and as imaginative as Chateaubriand, the French romanticist, whose *Génie de Christianisme* appeared in 1802. To and fro the genial influence was spread, now crossing the Channel, now re-crossing it, till every nation became a people of the Book. The jealously guarded treasure was broadcast at last, and if English heirs of Wiclif and Tyndale and the

translators of the Authorized Version seek a signal example of the distribution of Biblical culture in the nineteenth century, they should consider the contrast between the language of Swinburne [1] and his thought, and observe how the Hebraism of his style coalesces with the Hellenism of his intellect.

[1] Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1837–1909. "No influence moulded his phraseology so completely as the sacred literature, biblical and liturgical, of the religion whose professors were the object of his tireless invective" (*Cambridge History of English Literature*, xiii, 130).

CHAPTER V

Milton

A REVOLUTION rolls between *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost*, but Shakespeare, it should be remembered, was only 44 years of age, when, on 9th December, 1608, John Milton, son of John Milton, was born in Bread Street, Cheapside. Shakespeare's mother had died in the autumn of the same year, and speculation may play with the fancy—suppose he had survived her for the normal generation. He died, as a fact, at 52, a constant reminder to middle-aged men of what has been accomplished in one adult lifetime ; but, not to stretch an idle fancy too far, if in the pleasant surroundings of New Place, Stratford-on-Avon, near enough to Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where the Miltons settled in 1632, Shakespeare had lived to be seventy-five, he might have read the poems of what is known as Milton's first period, which closed in 1639.[1] He might have read Milton's early Latin poems, his ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, *Lycidas*.

We venture to reconstruct what was destroyed by a fever or by imperfect sanitary conditions, because it is commonly forgotten how close in time Shakespeare and Milton were, and how close, likewise, in Renais-

[1] Milton's thirty-first year : "At this point, the first period in his life and work closed. The curtain, in fact, fell on more than an act ; it practically closes the first play of a trilogy, the second of which had hardly anything to do with the first, though the third was to resume and complete it." Professor G. Saintsbury, *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vii, 100.

sance derivation. The forgetfulness is reasonable enough. Between Milton's first and third periods stretched his middle years, 1640–60, which changed, with his help, the face of Tudor England ; while his third period, 1663–74, containing the poems by which he is chiefly famous—*Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*—contained, too, the centenary of Shakespeare's birth, which seems to shut the two poets into separate centuries. But the likeness persists through seeming differences. The revolutionary middle years of Milton's life never really interrupted the continuity of his devotion to the poet's calling : so much more stable are spiritual factors, binding men and nations together, than political factors which may divide them ; so much more significant to the history of the mind of Europe, of which its literary expression in England is a part, was the common genius of a Cervantes and a Shakespeare than the clash of their countries in war ; so much clearer was that literary expression in the like notes of Shakespeare and Milton than in the temporal distractions which drew the younger poet away from pure letters.

It is, accordingly, as a Renaissance poet that the student of literature approaches the major name of Milton. Whatever the value to political history of the middle period of his life, as Latin Secretary to the Council of State, when he sharpened his pen to the function of a sword (and that value was considerable), the historian of English poetry may account it chiefly valuable as providing experience for reflection. Milton was not the first poet, and he was not to be the last, to cross poetry with politics, or to seek in the press of the fight a quicker way to the ideas of the imagination. Dante, who wrote the *Vita Nuova*, the mystical prose-poem of rarified love, and the epical *Divina Commedia*, of love exalted to heaven from hell, was a political

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We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake ; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held—WORDSWORTH

[*face p. 116*

exile from his native Florence, and taught Milton the vocabulary of hate. Petrarch, nursing a Latin epic, composing his *Epistle to Posterity*, and tuning his lyre to Laura, sought the liberation of his country as intently as manuscripts of Cicero, and even conspired with Rienzi to re-establish a people's tribune in Rome. Shelley took lessons from William Godwin, and Wordsworth from Michel Beaupuy ; and Byron died for liberty at Missolonghi. The generous ardour of poets in all ages, down to Rupert Brooke in our own, has been poured into political causes.[1] The difference between Milton and other poets who have written or fought for such causes is one of degree, not kind, and the degree is lessened considerably when Milton and Dante are compared. Moreover, though Milton's statecraft was more intense than that of other poets, though he was as fully liable to a rebel's fate after the Restoration of 1660 as if he had served Cromwell in arms, we must recall his temperament and the times. Between the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603 and the execution of Charles I in 1649 there were only six and forty years, but they included Milton's " first period ". It was a strange seed-time for sensitive youth, those brief years between the " Gloriana " epoch of idealized sovereignty and the stern realism of the axe, between the temper of " Cynthia's shepherds " and that of the Puritan " Roundheads ", between the old " merrie England " of an irresponsible commonalty and the slowly-builded England of democratic self-confidence ; and Milton, meditating the muse in the easy circumstances provided by his wise father, meditated the times as well.

After all, it was the tradition of national poets. Dante,

[1] *Tomando ora l'espada, ora la pluma,* " wielding now the sword, now the pen," was a verse from the Third Eclogue of Garcilasso de la Vega (1503–36), who was known in his day as the Prince of Spanish poets.

we saw, wrote a *de Monarchia* as well as a *de Vulgari Eloquio*, a treatise on the government of Italy as well as in the language of her muse. Chaucer, pushing English trade on diplomatic missions abroad, enhanced the powers of his native language to a degree not fully understood till Tyrwhitt's edition of his poems in 1775. Spenser sought from all available sources the models of "a good governour and a vertuous man", and cultivated at the same time his "bare and barren mother-tongue". The two aims, as we have shown, were pursued together, a fit polity and a fit language, along one road,[1] and, therefore, we are the less surprised that Milton, who had written treatises on *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *Reformation in England*, and similar topics, should have written in a Preface to *Paradise Lost* :—

> The measure is English heroic verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin. . . . Not without cause some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rime both in longer and shorter works. . . . This neglect then of rime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it is rather to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming.

Surely this passage, *mutatis mutandis*, repeats the very spirit of the verses from the Epilogue to Chaucer's *Troilus*, quoted on a former page :—

> Go, little book, . . .
> And for there is so great diversity
> In English, and in writing of our tongue,
> So pray I God that none miswritë thee,
> Nor thee mis-metre for default of tongue.

For the high calling of poetry in the Renaissance was a call to patriotism, too ; and, in this aspect, essential to fruitful criticism, Milton's prose-works

[1] See p. 37, above.

and the politics of his middle period are aligned with and subdued to the poetry, from which he went to them and to which he returned from them. It was the nearness and the loudness of the call to patriotism which drove the poetry underground for a while, to emerge with greater force into the upper air.

Milton belongs to the procession of the Renaissance. Intensely as he threw himself in later life into the turmoil of statecraft, and deeply as he pondered in studious youth serious things as well as light, combining *il Penseroso* with *l'Allegro*, yet he was in advance of rather than behind his times in his deference to the romantic taste in literature. His generation—the generation after 1660—was turning more and more securely to restraint, order, and regulation. Out of the freedom of the Pagan classics, which Petrarch had claimed in the fourteenth century, literary legislators in the seventeenth had extracted rules of classicism. Boileau,[1] in France, to whose name we shall come back, and who was the acknowledged master of those law-givers, dated the new order away back to the previous century, and associated it with the grammars and dictionaries of his fellow-countryman, François de Malherbe (1555–1628). "Enfin Malherbe vint," he exulted, more ecstatically, perhaps, than strictly accurately :—

> Enfin Malherbe vint, et le premier en France
> Fit sentir dans les vers une juste cadence:
> D'un mot mit en sa place enseigna le pouvoir,
> Et reduisit la Muse aux règles du devoir.
> Par ce sage écrivain la Langue reparée
> N'offrit plus rien de rude à l'oreille épurée.
> Les stances avec grace apprirent à tomber,
> Et le vers sur le vers n'osa plus enjamber.
> Tout reconnut ses lois, et ce guide fidèle
> Aux auteurs de ce temps sert encore de modèle.

[1] 1636–1711.

Malherbe led the muse back to the yoke of rules. Malherbe taught one verse not to overflow into the next.[1] Malherbe was a faithful guide to poets in the seventeenth century. But Milton, though so much Malherbe's junior, did not bend his knee to these formal laws. He kept Spenser's romantic company with Ariosto, Tasso, and their forebears, and the utmost that can be said in qualification of his succession as a Renaissance poet is that he was the poet of Luther's Renaissance—of the Renaissance which was turned to the Reformation by the ambition of jealous princes and the Spanish pride of the Emperor Charles V.

" Tout reconnut ses lois " : Malherbe's laws were universal, declared Boileau ; but their writ did not run at Horton, and it did not run when the Horton poet returned after 1660 to the muse which he had cultivated in his " first period ". He was still, in his " third period ", a Renaissance poet. He still refused to walk with Malherbe by the ordnance-survey of Boileau. Others might acknowledge the French law :—

> But he, though blind of sight,
> Despised, and thought extinguished quite,
> With inward eyes illuminated,
> His fiery virtue roused
> From under ashes into sudden flame.[2]

Nay, by the very words " fiery virtue ", Milton indicated his loyalty to the faith of individualism, which marked the revolt from authority at the dawn of the Renaissance in Italy. It was the quality invoked by Petrarch at the close of his famous *Ode*

[1] Malherbe's prohibition of *enjambement* (overrunning the sense from verse to verse) persisted in French poetic practice till 1830, when Victor Hugo broke it in his *Hernani*, with sensational effect on the first night of that play.

[2] *Samson Agonistes*, 1687–91.

to Italy,[1] and repeated from that *Ode* by Machiavelli in his final appeal to the Prince to-be. From Machiavelli it was communicated to Christopher Marlowe, whose dominant characters likewise display the same intense, individual *virtù*, or quality of a man, whether for evil or good, which Machiavelli desiderated for his Prince, and which Milton realized in his Satan :

> the unconquerable will,
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,
> And courage never to submit or yield.[2]

We may illustrate Milton's romantic ancestry and his partial resistance to the ideas of the new age from various points of view. There is, first, the evidence of his own poetry, and, next, the evidence of the poetry of his contemporaries. If we find that these are more and more addicted to the manner and style of the French literary reformers, if we find them accepting more and more willingly the limitations of Boileau and his school, and departing further from the lyrical profusion which the French Pleiad had taught to Tudor England, we shall have at least presumptive proof that the distance of Milton from Shakespeare was a condition of the times, and that the nearness of the two was determined by the genius of the younger poet.

The change was swift and cumulative. Less than eighteen years after Shakespeare's death, on 13th March, 1634, the French Academy held its first session. It proceeded at once to codify its rules of vocabulary and composition, one inference from which would be to condemn Elizabethan drama as irregular and even barbarous. Thus, as early as 1637, by the pressure of Cardinal Richelieu, the great patron of the Academy, it exacted from Corneille,[3] the leading playwright,

[1] See pp. 8 and 52, above. [2] *Paradise Lost*, i, 106–8.

[3] Pierre de Corneille, 1606–84. The battle raged over his drama of the *Cid*, founded on the Spanish national heroic romance (see

a surrender to the literal law of the Dramatic Unities of Place, Time, and Action, expanded by Italian and French commentators from a reference in Aristotle's *Poetics*. In the same year, 1637, René Descartes,[1] the eminent French rationalist, published his epoch-making *Discours sur la Méthode*, "for the right conduct of reason and for the discovery of truth in the sciences," which laid down the lines of so-called Cartesianism in various departments of human thought, and submitted the romantic universe to strict tests of order and discrimination. Thus, behind the curtains of the Academy, and by the polished patronage of Richelieu, on the classic stage of Corneille, in the *bon sens* exalted by Boileau, and the commonsense philosophy of Descartes, Parisian wit and learning were brought to bear on the current values of Renaissance literature, and checked its freedom and vagaries, already weakened by corrosion from within, and by the social reaction from indiscipline in public affairs. The politicians, who were setting their house in order, joined hands with the law-givers of Parnassus, and met in the *salons* of the great. Their new modes, the classical modes, as distinguished conventionally from the romantic, though the distinction was overdrawn in places, crossed the Channel from Paris to London, and this passage was assisted by the fact that Queen Henrietta Maria, the French consort of

p. 13, note 1). The dramatic unities of place, time, and action, were observed on the French stage till the nineteenth century, and exactly suited the genius of Racine, 1639–99, in the *grand siècle Louis quatorze*. The course of their gradual formulation out of the hints in Aristotle is traced by Sir John Sandys, *History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. ii, ch. xi, Cambridge, 1908, and they were neatly summarized by Boileau in the distich :—

> Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour, un seul fait accompli
> Tienne jusqu'à la fin le théâtre rempli.

See, too, chapter V, below.

[1] 1596–1650.

Charles I, who had escaped to her native country in 1644, was attended in Paris from time to time by other victims of the "exile", including Sir John Denham and Edmund Waller (1606–87), two influential poets of the new school. Waller's interesting career included politics as well as letters. He was several times Member of Parliament, he led a plot to seize London for King Charles, and he survived to be pardoned by Cromwell and to write an elegy on his death. He was the famed lover of "Sacharissa", who was Dorothy, Countess of Sunderland; but Waller's particular interest in this context lies in the completeness of his contact with the forces which Milton resisted. Waller and Milton were of the same age and generation; each was politician as well as poet, and, incidentally, Waller had inherited the estate of Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire, to which county John Milton, senior, retired from business in 1632. Yet the contrast surpasses the likenesses. We recall what Boileau wrote about the reforms of Malherbe: "Enfin Malherbe vint," and so on. In 1664, John Dryden, poet and critic, to whose splendid renown we shall come back, wrote of Waller, almost in the same terms, that he "first made writing easily an art; first showed us how to conclude the sense, most commonly in distichs, which, in the verse of those before him, runs on for so many lines together, that the reader is out of breath to overtake it" ("le vers sur le vers n'osa plus enjamber"); and, some years later, in an anonymous preface to Waller's poems, the editor did not hesitate to say that "our language owes more to him than the French does to the whole Academy". The praise is excessive, of course, as excessive as Dryden's praise of Denham, that his *Cooper's Hill*, "for the majesty of the style, is, and ever will be, the exact standard of good writing." But the very excess of the praise poured

on these contemporaries of Milton shows how firmly he stood in the old, wild ways of the romantic poets, and how swiftly public taste was moving away on the quiet tide of French classicism.

The new creed, thus early praised and practised, was sobriety and restraint. Polite society turned its back on Eden and the garden of the Rose. The glades of Arcady were left unvisited. No ship any more " touch'd upon the deserts of Bohemia ".[1] The ranting heroes of romantic drama, storming earth and heaven with their passions, were subdued to the rule of the Unities. The eighteenth century was to come and go before a poet would take courage to denounce " the name of one Boileau " or to set wide again for the delight of humanity

> magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faëry lands forlorn.[2]

Meanwhile, Sir John Denham stated his conviction, for the guidance of contemporary poets (excepting the greatest !), that Parnassus was situated at a sensible poet's front door, and that it did not behove him to go adventuring :—

> Where the Muses and their train resort,
> Parnassus stands ; if I can be to thee
> A poet, thou Parnassus art to me.

So Denham wrote in 1642—the year, be it observed, of Newton's birth—and, celebrating the Thames instead of Hippocrene, and the slopes of Windsor instead of Mount Helicon, he refrained the ambition of his Pegasus, and composed the famous apostrophe to the Thames in *Cooper's Hill* :—

> O! could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme !

[1] Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, III, iii, 1.

[2] John Keats (1795–1821), *Sleep and Poetry* and *Ode to a Nightingale*.

Though deep, yet clear ; though gentle, yet not dull ;
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full . . .
This scene had some bold Greek or British bard
Beheld of old, what stories we had heard
Of fairies, satyrs, and the nymphs their dames,
Their feasts, their revels, and their amorous flames.

Fairies, whether gregarious or forlorn, were ruled out of bounds for British bards, and Dryden, Denham's eulogist and Waller's, invoked not long afterwards the

hope, that, having seen the days
When nothing flourish'd but fanatic bays,
All will at length in this opinion rest,
" A sober Prince's government is best."

Prince and poet, thus recalled to smooth courses, should command the consent of men of wit, as distilled in the French Academy and London coffee-houses out of the wilder fancies rebuked by Descartes. May we not, therefore, say, adding all these evidences together, that, even in Milton's " first period ", the spirit of European poetry was passing away from the " sweetest Shakespeare " of his *Allegro*—

Fancy's child,
Warbling his native wood-notes wild—

into the keeping of less " bold ", or lyrical, or " fanatic " poets ?

This movement may be illustrated by two examples, taking us back to the crucial year 1637. In that year there happened to die Edward King and the Lady Northumberland, a daughter of the second Earl of Salisbury. Each loss was deplored in verse—the former in a memorial volume which included (and survives by) Milton's *Lycidas*, the latter in a set of verses by Edmund Waller *To my Lord Northumberland, upon the Death of his Lady*. The circumstances were different, of course : a personal sorrow in the one instance, and a public man's private bereavement

in the other ; but how much more unlike, and how illuminating, are the contemporary poets' modes of consolation. It is worth while to dwell briefly on this contrast in the elegies of 1637. The opening lines of *Lycidas* are well known :—

> Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
> Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
> I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
> And with forced fingers rude
> Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
> Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
> Compels me to disturb your season due :
> For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
> Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
> Who would not sing for Lycidas, he knew
> Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
> He must not float upon his watery bier
> Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
> Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Less familiar, but not much less striking in the place which they were written to fill, is Waller's address to Lord Northumberland :—

> To this great loss a sea of tears is due ;
> But the whole debt not to be paid by you. . . .
> You that have sacrificed so great a part
> Of youth and private bliss, ought to impart
> Your sorrow too, and give your friends a right
> As well in your affliction as delight.
> Then with Æmilian courage bear this cross,
> Since public persons only public loss
> Ought to affect. And though her form and youth,
> Her application to your will and truth,
> That noble sweetness and that humble state
> (All snatched away by such a hasty fate !)
> Might give excuse to any common breast,
> With the huge weight of so just grief oppressed ;
> Yet let no portion of your life be stained
> With passion, but your character maintained
> To the last act.

Even allowing for the difference in circumstances, the difference in style is so remarkable as hardly to admit of contemporaneousness. They are not different as Tennyson and Browning differed, in a generation still within living memory ; but they differ by signs of an age : it is a vertical, not a horizontal difference. We may press the comparison to particulars, a rarely permissible indulgence. Observe Waller's " her form and youth " abstracted from Lady Northumberland's personality, and Milton's piercing " young Lycidas " ; Waller's " snatched away by such a hasty fate ", and Milton's " dead ere his prime "; Waller's conventional " sea of tears ", and Milton's " some melodious tear ". A poignancy is taken out of poetry when *what seems proper for feeling* displaces *what I feel*, and eloquence (wit) expels lyricism, and passion is deprecated, and grief is reduced to a sociable scale. Observe, too, that, while Waller's couplets anticipate the metre of Pope, Milton's elegy reverts, in form and diction, through the Elizabethans and their Italian models, to Theocritus, beloved of the French Pleiad, whose innovations were combed out by Malherbe. The name Lycidas is Theocritean. " Lycidas is dead, young Lycidas " is an echo from Spenser's elegy on Sir Philip Sidney, which reminds us that a certain Philip Ayres (1638–1712) apologized in the preface to his book of verse for going back to the manner of " the famous Mr Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, and Mr Milton ". Is further evidence sought to the contrast ? Take the sound-repetition in Milton's opening verses : *sere*, *year*, *dear*, *peer*, *bier*, *tear*, so offensive, in its emotional appeal, to the principles of the new school ; take, a few lines further down, the " rough Satyrs ", " Fauns " and " nymphs ", and the " old bards, the famous Druids " themselves, who may actually have been in Denham's mind when he declaimed a

year or two later against the " bold Greek or British bard ", with his stories " of fairies, satyrs, and the nymphs their dames ".

The two streams, like the Blue and the White Niles, flowed together in English poetry for a while. Robert Herrick,[1] contemporary with Milton, who died in the same year, represents the decadence of lyric love-song. Andrew Marvell,[2] Milton's friend and admirer, withdrew from the contest of wit into a sanctuary of his own,

> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green thought in a green shade,

immeasurably remote from the trim parterres decorated by French gardeners at Versailles. But the poets of fancy and metaphysics, the late brood of the Renaissance, disappeared after the middle of the seventeenth century. Shakespeare himself, we will not say disappeared, but was " improved " and " revised " for reappearance : " the old plays," declared Evelyn, the diarist, after seeing *Hamlet* in 1661, " began to disgust the refined age," and Pepys, with his average taste, found *The Midsummer Night's Dream* " most insipid and ridiculous ". The *bon sens des honnêtes gens* was more at home on the level than in the mountains, and, in Denham's company on the banks of the Thames, when the French Academy was newly founded, and " smooth " Waller was recommending decent tears, readers were not willing to be disturbed out of the conventions of common feeling. They regulated emotion and its expression. They discounted the strangeness of Nature, anticipating Pope's comfortable assurance, that

> All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee ;

[1] 1591–1674.

[2] 1621–78. The quotation is from Marvell's *Thoughts in a Garden*.

and the known heights of Cooper's Hill and the known depths of the Thames at Windsor became the measure of the hills of imagination and of the perilous seas of faëry. Poets very deliberately preferred, after tiresome experience among the fantastics, to be social, reasonable, correct, and, " without o'erflowing, full ", and to commend this propriety of conduct in a metre governed by the law that the sense and the pauses should be coincident. The revival of the heroic couplet ousted the lyrical will as well as lyrical metres. Take, finally, at this junction of the streams, the evidence of poets' similes. Just before the verses from *Cooper's Hill* quoted on p. 124, occur the lines :—

> Thames, the most lov'd of all the Ocean's sons
> By his old sire, to his embraces runs ;
> Hasting to pay his tribute to the sea,
> Like mortal life to meet eternity.

Compare with this likeness of mortal life to eternity the same likeness in Shelley's *Adonais* of 1821 :—

> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of eternity,

and we shall see more clearly what disappeared in the middle of the seventeenth century till the revival of romance towards the close of the eighteenth. Milton's dolphins lay couched in their sea-lairs [1]; Wieland's griffin roamed unharnessed on the hills.[2]

But Milton was unreconciled on Pisgah. The *bon sens des honnêtes gens* could not appease his passion for Zion. Already in 1644, when Herrick was singing to his mistresses, and Denham was emulating the smooth Thames, and Waller was composing

1 " And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth ! "—*Lycidas*, 1637.

2 " Noch einmal sattelt mir den Hippogriff, O ihr Musen, Und fort ins alte romantische Land ! " *Oberon*, 1780, by Christoph Martin Wieland, 1733–1813 (Once more saddle me the griffin, ye Muses, and away to the old land of Romance !).

private sorrow to the standard of public men, Milton, his singing-robes laid aside, was reminding the Lords and Commons of England :—

> what nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are governors : a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious and piercing spirit ; acute to invent, subtile and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to. . . . Now once again, by all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of holy and devout men, as they daily and solemnly express their thoughts, God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in His Church, even to the reforming of Reformation itself ; what does He then but reveal himself to His servants, and, as His manner is, first to His Englishmen ?

And, then, having swept away the barriers set by commonsense against soaring genius, he quits the level ways of men and cries aloud :—

> Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant Nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks : methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam ; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance ; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means.[1]

" Gentle," " without rage," " without o'erflowing ": Milton in his fiery thirties had no use for Denham's symbols of propriety, and if these passages from *Areopagitica* typify his transit from verse to prose, and his entry into his " second period ", there seems little to distinguish it either from the " first " or from the " third ", when he, as we read above,

> though blind of sight,
> Despised, and thought extinguished quite,

[1] From Milton's *Areopagitica, A speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, 1644.

With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue roused
From under ashes into sudden flame.

For it has the true accent of the Renaissance, this eloquent passage of Milton's prose, with his exaltation of his country and his belief in his own powers. And one point calls for special notice. We shall not be departing from the historic facts if we select his phrase about "the reforming of Reformation itself" as supplying the measure and content of Milton's contribution to European letters. There was a moment in the growth of the mind of Europe when Renaissance and Reformation were at one, when both were seeking by one effort to extend the resources and capacities of the human intellect. We might call it the moment of Erasmus, the truest European who ever lived; or we might identify it with Johann Reuchlin, who was in one sense the maker of the German Reformation and in another the product of the Italian Renaissance; or we might go one step further back, and recall from the Italian fifteenth century the name of Pico della Mirandola,[1] who, though he died at 31, dominated by his genius and personality his colleagues, teachers and fellow-students. The President of the Platonic Academy at Florence greeted his arrival there as a kind of advent; Sir Thomas More wrote his *Life* in 1510, and Walter Pater in 1871 still acknowledged his spell. "He will not let one go," he wrote, "he wins one on, in spite of one's self, to turn again to the pages of his forgotten books." The moment passed, as historians remind us[2]: it is the ideas,

[1] 1463–94.

[2] See, for instance, *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. i, ch. xvi (by Sir R. C. Jebb), especially p. 571: "For Italy, the whole movement of the Renaissance is virtually identical with the restoration of classical learning. It is otherwise when we follow that movement into northern Europe. . . . Germany drew fresh mental vigour and freedom from

not their vessels, which are significant, and we may interpret this "reforming of the Reformation", which Milton desiderated in 1644, as a return to the Reformation which miscarried from the Reformation which was fulfilled.[1]

If we try to analyse those ideas, shot through with the colours of the morning, as it moved from the east to the south, we are lost in a maze of speculation.[2] They were part-Hebrew, part-Greek in composition, and they persuaded the minds of emulous youth in days and nights of rapt talk about philosophy, when the authentic text of every ancient philosopher was still awaiting or had just attained its *editio princeps*. The mere abstract beauty of the ideas, which sought to reconcile Christ with Plato, and Moses with both, filled those young students with eager courage to solve the mysteries of creation. But the ideas did not survive transplantation. Somehow, the glamour escaped between the leaves of the grammars, commentaries and dictionaries in which the New (sacred) Learning was expounded, till the Reformation took its sterner road into fields of religious warfare. This aim at "reforming the Reformation", to which Milton, a son of the Renaissance, dedicated his youth and middle-age, and to which he made the sacrifice of his eyesight, was as a dream when one

the Classical Revival, without adopting the Italian ideal of self-culture, or admitting a refined Paganism into social life. . . . The German Renaissance is the Reformation."

[1] "The Reformation that has been is Luther's monument: perhaps the Reformation that is to be will trace itself back to Erasmus."—*The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century in its Relation to Modern Thought and Knowledge*. By Charles Beard, LL.D., with Introduction by Ernest Barker, D.Litt., London, 1927; p. 73. This excellent book, the *ed. pr.* of which appeared in 1883, before my working time, reached me after the above paragraphs had been written. See, too, p. 97, n. 2.

[2] See Appendix V.

awaketh. " He could not change the character of a people, nor perpetuate his dynasty," we are aptly told: but " whether he treat of religion, or of education, or of civil government " (three main topics of the Humanists), " the error is always the same, a confidence too absolute in the capacity and integrity of the reasonable soul of man ".[1]

The most direct approach to Milton's romance-epics (*Paradise Lost* in twelve Books, and *Paradise Regained* in four), the form which, after ample preparation, he selected as the medium of his poetic message, is through his own invocations to the Muse. There are three principal invocations : from the first and seventh Books of *Paradise Lost* and from Book I of *Paradise Regained* ; and they are worth studying a little closely, as follows :—

(1) . . . Sing, Heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos : or, if Sion's hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount.

(2) Descend from Heaven, Urania, by that name
If rightly thou art called, whose voice divine
Following, above the Olympian hill I soar,
Above the flight of Pegasean wing.

(3) . . . Inspire
As thou art wont, my prompted song, else mute,
And bear through highth or depth of Nature's bounds,
With prosperous wing full summed, to tell of deeds
Above heroic.

[1] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Milton*, London, 1900 ; pp. 264 and 64.

Note the iteration of the word " above ". He is resolved to soar *above* (the Aonian) Mount Helicon to the rarer air of Horeb or Sinai, where a Mosaic muse (of the shepherd of the chosen seed), invented, we may say, *pro hac vice*, discharges the functions of her Greek sister, and, adding thereto " heavenly " powers, piles Hebraism on Hellenism. Again, *above* the Olympian hill, he is to soar *above* the flight of winged Pegasus, whom Sir John Denham, taming him with a French bit, would have hobbled, we remember, in a home-paddock. And, once more, and most characteristically, he was resolved " to tell of deeds *above* heroic ".

Heroic deeds had contented former poets. National heroes had wrought their deeds (or *geste*), and the compilers of *chansons de geste* had adorned them with legend and marvel. Out of the *chansons*, epic writers in the Renaissance had quarried the material for their romances : Ariosto, for his romance of Roland out of the *geste* of Charlemagne ; Spenser, for his romance of the *Faerie Queen* out of the *geste* of King Arthur ; Tasso, for his romance of Christian Europe, out of the *geste* in front of Antioch and Jerusalem. And Milton, too, had been content with this tradition, which extended from the eleventh century to his day. He, too, would treat of deeds heroic. He, too, had pondered the *geste* of Arthur, the legendary hero of his own country, as material for a new epic romance of the Renaissance. He announced it in the most solemn way, even confiding it to the fatherly indulgence of Tasso's most intimate friend, who was still alive, in old age, in 1638. The passage occurs in a set of Latin verses, addressed by Milton to the Marquis Manso, whom he had recently visited at Naples, and he confirmed his intention a year or two later in a Latin elegy to Charles Diodati (*Epitaphium Damonis*, 1639). His purpose was to recall to English verse the heroic

Kings of his native land—Arthur waging his twelve battles, the Knights of the Table Round, and the rest of the "matière de Bretagne", which was a branch of the old story-quarry.

But heroic deeds did not finally suffice him. His soaring ambition may still be traced, in a list, preserved at Trinity College, Cambridge, of more than ninety topics, or variants of topics, which he turned over for his poem. Sometimes he drafted it for epical, sometimes for dramatic form, but gradually it assumed the outline, which its final version filled in, of an epic romance of "deeds above heroic", wrought by no earthly princes, but by the chivalry of Heaven. Milton's attraction to a Scriptural theme may have been strengthened by the French verse-tales of Guillaume du Bartas,[1] composed just before Malherbe arrived, and entitled *La Semaine*, "The Seven Days," and, less probably, by the Dutch play, *Lucifer*, written in 1654 by Joost van den Vondel. But more interesting than former manipulators of the sacred material, or than the slow shaping of that material in Milton's mind, is the fact that he treated his super-heroic theme in the authentic manner of a poet of heroic deeds. True, he used blank verse instead of rhymed stanzas, but each was equally a gift of the Renaissance, imported into England from Italy, and the demands of blank verse on the trained ear were not less strict than those of rhyme. In all else, *Paradise Lost*, like the *Orlando Furioso* or the *Faerie Queen*, was the romance-epic of a Renaissance poet—a poet of the northern as well as of the southern Renaissance—a classical scholar, a skilled musician, a fearless venturer, unafraid to invoke even the "Heavenly Muse", and to employ, as material for his heroic poem, the *geste* of the Bible itself.[2]

[1] 1544–90; *La Semaine*, seven books, 1578.

[2] "The abstract inspiration of the Virgilian form of Epic, before

We hear one voice through all his musings. We hear it in his seventh Latin elegy, written at the age of 19, with its explicit allusion to one woman's face in a crowd. We hear it in his early sonnet *To the Nightingale*, which " with fresh hope the lover's heart doth fill "; in his first reference to Shakespeare (1630), who

> in our wonder and astonishment,
> Hast built thyself a livelong monument. . . .
> Dost make us marble with too much conceiving,
> And so sepúlchred in such pomp dost lie
> That Kings for such a tomb would wish to die ;

in the Renaissance sentiment, in *Lycidas*, lines 70–1, which must have consoled many a lonely voyager through strange seas of thought,

> Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
> (That last infirmity of noble mind)
> To scorn delights and live laborious days ;

in the allusions, in *Il Penseroso*, lines 16–20, to the allegorical romance-epicists of the day before his own :—

> And if aught else great bards beside
> In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
> Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
> Of forests, and enchantments drear,
> Where more is meant than meets the ear ;

in the famous passage in *Lycidas*, lines 113–31, where the " blind mouths " of the Church are denounced in terms which recall the speeches of Piers in the fifth eclogue of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* ; and in many more Elizabethan echoes, too numerous

the subject was determined at all, must count for more than a little in the history of Milton's poetry." W. P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden*, Oxford, 1900 ; vol. i, p. xviii.

to assemble, among which we select, for example, *Comus*, at line 739:—

> Beauty is Nature's coin; must not be hoarded,
> But must be current; and the good thereof
> Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
> Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself.
> If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
> It withers on the stalk with languished head.
> Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
> In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities, . . .
> It is for homely features to keep home.[1]

Life and time, and what they brought and took away, worked their way with the growth of this poet's mind, though its silent, inevitable development was not traced by Milton for his readers, as Wordsworth in a later day treated a not dissimilar experience in *The Prelude*. But the mood persisted through shock and change. Milton's mood of romantic courage, his allegiance to his Renaissance masters, was never repressed into impotence nor secluded into excess. He was never a "smooth" poet after the French pattern, regulating his passions to Malherbe's laws, nor a "gay" poet, singing in a garden and seeing a face in every flower, and gay even unto death for a point of honour. Nor, despite the gibes of his opponents, is Milton ever revealed in his poetry as a "blind guide" of counsels which were reversed. No, his mortal voice, inspired by the Heavenly Muse, was still

> unchanged
> To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,
> On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues,
> In darkness, and with danger compassed round,

[1] The "Rose" parallel is a commonplace of the Renaissance, descended from the *Roman de la Rose*. That Beauty should be distributed, not hoarded, was an obvious Humanist reflection; see, *inter alia*, Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 163 ff., and the opening scene of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

and, thus inspired, he continued to sing his " prompted song, else mute ".[1]

This persistent inspiration of the Renaissance sometimes constrained him to set his " deeds above heroic " to the measure of merely heroic deeds. Thus, an essential feature of the romance-epics of Ariosto and his successors was the gorgeous pomp " of turneys and of trophies ", of processions, feasts, and courtly scenes ; and the muse of Sinai sometimes conspired with the muse of Helicon to reproduce these effects in *Paradise Lost*. Take, particularly, Book V, and consider, at verse 350, the *cause* in former tales of heroic deeds for these *effects* in Milton's epic of super-heroes :—

> Meanwhile our primitive great Sire, to meet
> His godlike guest, walks forth, without more train
> Accompanied than with his own complete
> Perfections ; in himself was all his state,
> More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits
> On princes, when their rich retinue long
> Of horses led and grooms besmeared with gold
> Dazzles the crowd and sets them all agape.

And, again, at verse 378 :—

> So to the sylvan lodge
> They came, that like Pomona's arbour smiled,
> With flowerets decked and fragrant smells. But Eve,
> Undecked, save with herself, more lovely fair
> Than wood-nymph, or the fairest goddess feigned
> Of three that in Mount Ida naked strove,
> Stood to entertain her guest from Heaven ; no veil
> She needed, virtue-proof.

And, once more, at verse 433 :—

> So down they sat,
> And to their viands fell ; nor seemingly
> The Angel, nor in mist—the common gloss

[1] *P.L.*, vii, 24–7 ; *P.R.*, i, 12.

Of theologians—but with keen dispatch
Of real hunger, and concoctive heat
To transubstantiate : what redounds transpires
Through Spirits with ease ; nor wonder, if by fire
Of sooty coal the empiric alchemist
Can turn, or holds it possible to turn,
Metals of drossiest ore to perfect gold,
As from the mine. Meanwhile at table Eve
Ministered naked, and their flowing cups
With pleasant liquors crowned.

We might almost say, if it were not irreverent, that Heaven could cramp the style of the votary of the " Heavenly Muse ". Milton becomes sensible of the bareness of the region of " deeds above heroic ", compared with the commoner splendours of the region of heroic deeds. There was no retinue of knights in the train of his super-hero, setting out to meet his guest : " in himself was all his state." There was no embroidery of handicraft to adorn the ladies in the procession, but only " Eve, undecked save with herself "; and, in order to provide the feast, without which no heroic occasion could be complete, Milton invented for his super-heroes a common heroic digestion, with " concoctive heat to transubstantiate " the indispensable viands and liquors. Can we not see the romantic tradition holding in the thrall of its " tedious pomp " the poet who followed the " voice divine above the Olympian hill " ? [1]

[1] Cf. *Paradise Lost*, ix, 13–47, where the poet expressly rejects the choice of an epic of

Wars, hitherto the only argument
Heroic deemed, chief mastery to dissect
With long and tedious havoc fabled knights
In battles feigned (the better fortitude
Of patience and heroic martyrdom
Unsung), or to describe races and games,
Or tilting furniture, emblazoned shields,
Impresses quaint, caparisons and steeds,

But almost always he was upborne, " with prosperous wing full summed ", to the heights to which he aspired. Milton's sublimity is attained when the grace of the " Heavenly Muse " descends with equal sureness from Mount Sinai and Mount Helicon at once ; when he lives actively in his world of contemplation, and draws out of his pity for the " loss of Eden " strength to " justify the ways of God to men ".

Great passage after passage might be quoted to display the essential Milton, whose poetry at its loftiest level may most adequately be described, in relation to his life and to his muse, in the words of Tennyson's *Oenone*:—

> My vigour, wedded to thy blood,
> Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
> To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
> Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
> Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
> Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
> Commeasure perfect freedom.

Such a passage, musical with romance and yet " sinewed " with morality, will be found—one among very many—in Adam's speech, verses 720–844 of Book X of *Paradise Lost* :—

> O miserable of happy! Is this the end
> Of this new glorious World, and me so late
> The glory of that glory . . .
> O fleeting joys
> Of Paradise, dear bought with lasting woes! . . .
> Yet one doubt
> Pursues me still—lest all I cannot die. . . .

> Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights
> At joust and tournament; then marshalled feast . . .

and so on. Does he not almost convert his rejection into a kind of acknowledgment of claim ?

No one can read this lament, too long for reproduction, without realizing the perfection of its diction, and the marriage of that perfect diction to sublime argument. It was of passages like these that Dr Johnson wrote, in his essay on Milton about a hundred years after the poet's death : " The characteristic quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace, but his natural port is gigantic loftiness."

Milton, like Dante, a solitary poet, pursued, as he said in his own exordium, " things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." And, because the things were unattempted, he could reach them only by tentative words. We breathe, as he said in another place, " empyreal air " in his company, and the Miltonic style, in other company, applied to less rarely attempted things, misses the perfection which he attained, and leaves us with a sense of vacancy, of emptiness. There is a hollow sound about abstract words applied to visible, tangible objects. They compose " poetic diction " instead of poetry—half dead words falling away from truth, instead of names identified with objects; and this was the fate of Milton's language when little Miltons or Miltonizers used it in common air for customary things. His physical blindness, too, subserved his style. Shape and colour had lost their insistence, and this loss conspired with the strangeness of Milton's world (his " new, glorious World ") to recommend the more nebulous epithets which float down the pages of *Paradise Lost*. Take any twenty lines in the poem: we have opened it at Book VI, verse 68, and we find " *obvious* hill " (in the Latin sense of opposing the way), " *straitening* vale," " *perfect* ranks," " *passive* air," " *nimble* tread," " *orderly* array," " province *wide*," " *battailous* aspect," " *upright* beams," " *rigid* spears," " *banded* powers,"

"*furious* expedition," "*proud* aspirer." There is not a surprise in the lot ; there is nothing personal or individual in them ; and romantic leaders of a later generation found them uncommunicative and cold.

But Milton stands outside the critics' categories. He was a Romantic poet constrained to Classic diction, a Renaissance writer who sought to reform the Reformation. In the history of the development of the mind of Europe, he stood on a watershed of thought, while the streams flowed down and left him lonely. But the moment was eternized by his achievement, and the grave majesty of his verse outlasts the changing fashions of active men.

CHAPTER VI

Dryden

NAAMAN'S impatient question, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" might have been asked by English writers after 1660, when John Dryden[1], by the tranquil stimulus of precept and example, was urging them to refresh themselves in the Jordan of French taste. A French bath would wash away the obscurities, which home waters were too stagnant to remove. By learning French, they would become European again, Dryden said in effect: the way back to Chaucer was through Paris. Take, for instance, his praise of Boileau, in the *Discourse* (1693) *concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*:

> If I would only cross the seas, I might find in France a living Horace and a Juvenal, in the person of the admirable Boileau; whose numbers are excellent, whose expressions are noble, whose thoughts are just, whose language is pure, whose satire is pointed, and whose sense is close; what he borrows from the Ancients, he repays with usury of his own, in coin as good, and almost as universally valuable; for, setting prejudice and partiality apart, though he is our enemy, the stamp of a Louis, the patron of all arts, is not much inferior to the medal of an Augustus Cæsar.

Take, again, though it is not so decisive, an earlier passage from the *Essay* (1668) *of Dramatic Poesy*, where Lisideius (Sir Charles Sedley) says to Neander (Dryden):

> If the question had been stated, who had writ best, the French or English, forty years ago, I should have been

[1] 1631–1700.

> of your opinion, and adjudged the honour to our own nation; but since that time we have been so long together bad Englishmen, that we had not leisure to be good poets. Beaumont, Fletcher, and Jonson (who were only capable of bringing us to that degree of perfection which we have) were just then leaving the world; as if (in an age of so much horror) wit, and those milder studies of humanity, had no further business among us. But the Muses, who ever follow peace, went to plant in another country: it was then that the great Cardinal of Richelieu began to take them into his protection; and that, by his encouragement, Corneille, and some other Frenchmen, reformed their theatre, which before was as much below ours, as it now surpasses it and the rest of Europe.

True, Neander (Dryden) modified this eulogy. So far as drama was concerned, the rivers of Damascus were not to be despised; Dryden never lost his sense of Shakespeare's greatness: "I am of opinion," Neander answered, "that neither our faults nor their (the French) virtues are considerable enough to place them above us." Again, from a slightly different angle, in the *Defence* (1672) *of the Epilogue*, Dryden expressed his disapproval "of their way of refining, who corrupt our English idiom by mixing it too much with French: that is a sophistication of language, not an improvement of it; a turning English into French, rather than a refining of English by French"; and, still in this context of the drama, we may quote from Dryden's Preface to *All for Love* (his play on Shakespeare's theme of Antony and Cleopatra) the remark that he would not have troubled himself "thus far with French poets, but that I find our *chedreux* (periwigged) critics wholly form their judgment by them. But for my part," he added, "I desire to be tried by the laws of my own country; for it seems unjust to me, that the French should prescribe here, till they have conquered." Still, it is clear, as much from Dryden's hesitancies as from

DRYDEN

By him we were taught sapere et fari, *to think naturally and express forcibly. What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden,* lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit. *He found it brick, and he left it marble*—Dr. Johnson

[*face p. 144*

his assertions, that he believed in the efficacy of French waters. He recommended "a refining of English by French". Though Boileau was, politically, our enemy, yet, æsthetically, the stamp of Louis Quatorze conferred a kind of Augustan diploma. The French question was alive in Dryden's day; and, while his easy and unforced consideration of it reduced the excesses of "chedreux" critics to a temperate coolnêss of judgment, its urgency shows what rapid progress had been made by the writ of the French Academy in the very period of *Paradise Lost*.

Dr Richard Garnett, writing of this period, says that, "in becoming for a moment French, English literature first became European."[1] The statement contains a truth, but it does not contain the whole truth. English literature first became European when Chaucer went to France and Italy for his models; and it was Shakespeare who gave supreme expression to the spirit of the European Renaissance. Moreover, it was by *not* becoming French, by not becoming "wholly" French, as Dryden wrote, that English literature became European, and not a province of French literature, in that moment. For Dryden was a wiser critic than Pope, to whom we shall come back, and who wrote, in 1733, in an Epistle addressed to King George II:—

> We conquer'd France, but felt our captive's charms;
> Her arts victorious triumph'd o'er our arms;
> Britain to soft refinements[2] less a foe,
> Wit grew polite, and numbers learn'd to flow.
> Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join
> The varying verse, the full resounding line,
> The long majestic march, and energy divine.
> Though still some traces of our rustic vein,
> And splay-foot verse, remain'd, and will remain.

[1] *The Age of Dryden*, London, 1895.

[2] The "refinements" which Dryden (above) had sought to moderate.

Late, very late, correctness grew our care,
When the tired nation breathed from civil war.
Exact Racine, and Corneille's noble fire,
Show'd us that France had something to admire.
Not but the tragic spirit was our own,
And full in Shakespeare, fair in Otway shone;
But Otway fails to polish or refine,
And fluent Shakespeare scarce effaced a line.
Even copious Dryden wanted, or forgot,
The last and greatest art, the art to blot.

Pope's perception of Dryden's eminence is just, but Dryden, we note again, had been more discriminating in his admiration of the French task-masters. Pope overdrew the analogy between Anglo-French literary relations and the conquest of Roman arms by Greek arts.[1] "Our rustic vein," which closely recalls Sidney's objection to the rusticity of Spenser's shepherds, and may be compared with Milton's reference to Shakespeare's "wood-note wild" is unnecessarily depreciatory, and "splay-foot verse" repeats from Malherbe the prohibition of *enjambement*. The condemnation of fluency and copiousness may be contrasted with Dryden's praise of Chaucer, in the *Preface* (1700) *to the Fables*: "He has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humours of the whole English nation. . . 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that 'here is God's plenty'", and its hostility may be corrected by the epithet "exuberant" which is frequently and properly applied to the Elizabethan age. The real point is the *moderation* of Dryden's Frenchness—of his dose of Jordan at Damascus—and his sense of a European horizon. He was a

[1] The opening verses of the quotation from Pope recall Horace's similar statement (*Epistles*, II, i, 156–7):

Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
Intulit agresti Latio.

better European than Pope, and to that extent a saner Englishman. He looked over the trim hedges of Versailles, with its literary and landscape gardeners. Where he might have plunged us, like a more powerful Gabriel Harvey, into the narrow rule and pedantic yoke of an English Areopagus, he would not even subscribe in full to the brilliant law of "the great Cardinal of Richelieu". In the tremendous pother about the dramatic Unities, to which we referred in the last chapter, and which fell most heavily on Corneille, Dryden, who, unlike Corneille, was able to see beyond the foot-lights, was on the side of moderate liberty. "What will Lisideius say," he asked of the Gabriel Harvey of his day,

> "if they themselves acknowledge that they are too strictly tied up by those laws, for breaking which he has blamed the English? I will allege Corneille's words, as I find them in the end of his Discourse of the Three Unities: *Il est facile aux speculatifs d'estre severes*, etc. 'Tis easy for speculative [theoretic] persons to judge severely; but if they would produce to public view ten or twelve pieces of this nature, they would perhaps give more latitude to the rules than I [i.e. Corneille, speaking] have done, when by experience they had known how much we are limited and constrained by them, and how many beauties of the stage they banished from it . . .' Now what, I beseech you," concludes Dryden, "is more easy than to write a regular French play, or more difficult than to write an irregular English one, like those of Fletcher, or of Shakespeare?"

It may be urged that Dryden too, in this passage from the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, was "speculatif", theoretic, and that, when he passed from the theory to the practice of play-writing, he is found disappointing.[1] It may be urged, further, that "exact Racine", who

[1] See W. P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden*, Oxford, 1900, vol. i. p. xx.

was born in 1639, and who was just coming to the theatre, did produce those "ten or twelve pieces" which Corneille and Dryden could not find when the law of the Unities was first promulgated in its full force. So that Lisideius, reduced to silence in 1668 by Dryden's praise of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, whose plays Dryden described as "most correct", and in whose precepts for playwrights he found "as many and profitable rules for perfecting the stage as any wherewith the French can furnish us", might have replied, only a year or two later, "Yes, but what of Racine's *Britannicus*, 1669, *Bérénice*, 1670, *Bajazet*, 1672, *Mithridate*, 1673, *Iphigénie*, 1674, and *Phèdre*, 1677?" These, at any rate, were "regular" French plays, *not* easily written, and thoroughly within Aristotle's law of the Unities as expounded by Italian critics and adopted by French purists, and it is interesting to see how Dryden afterwards dealt with them. Writing in 1678, he saw, in the character of Hippolytus in *Phèdre*, "an excess of generosity, not practicable but with fools and madmen," and he declared that Racine had "transformed the Hippolytus of Euripides into Monsieur Hippolyte". Writing again in 1679, he said: "Racine's Bajazet is born at Constantinople, but his civilities are conveyed to him, by some secret passage, from Versailles into the Seraglio." Lisideius, we imagine, if the earlier dialogue could have been continued, might have contrived a reply to these criticisms. But could he have gainsaid the root-criticism, which is implicit, that Racine is more French than European, and that the French purge, recommended by Dryden, did not involve a Racinian immersion? And, if "exact Racine" exactly fitted the specifications of Boileau's poetics, is not the final answer to Lisideius and Pope given by the modern historian of criticism:

Boileau did not, like Dryden, leave escapes and safety-valves to the spirit that was too mighty for the narrower channels of poetic style; he exhibited none of his contemporary's catholicity of mind and taste; he had none of his noble enthusiasms, none of his constructive power and progressive flexibility in positive critical estimate. The good that he did is terribly chequered by the consideration that, in sharpening certain edges of the French mind, he blunted and distorted others in a fashion which, after two hundred years, has not been fully remedied.[1]

It will illustrate the complexity of events, and the conflicting threads, or radiations, of literary happenings in Europe in the seventeenth century, if we bring together some dates and facts; and across all three columns throughout the century we may trail a sentence by M. Faguet, the eminent French Academician, from the *Cambridge Modern History*, v, 71: "Whatever the explanation may be," he writes, recalling La Bruyère's reference to sturdy children who fight their nurses, "for nearly a hundred years France occupied a position towards every other European nation analogous to that of a nurse."

Date.	Event.	Remarks.
1601	Queen Elizabeth's Poor Law	"Replaced the Church's control of charity by the municipality and parish overseers."—K. Feiling. *England under the Tudors and Stuarts*, London, n.d., p. 107
1602	Shakespeare's *Hamlet*	"What a piece of work is a man!" —Act II, Sc. 2. See p. 70 above
1603	Florio's Montaigne's *Essays*	"Montaigne's name became a household word in Elizabethan England very soon after he had become the idol of French enlightenment."—Lee, *French Renaissance in Engld.*, Oxford, 1910; p. 170

[1] G. Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, 1902, vol. ii, p. 300.

Date.	Event.	Remarks.
1611	A.V. of the Bible	"The standard of our language." See p. 89, above
1616	Death of Cervantes Death of Shakespeare	
1618–48	Thirty Years War	"The terrible Thirty Years War crippled the unfortunate land [Germany] for nearly three generations."—Marvin, *Making of the Western Mind*, London, 1923; p. 208
1624–42	Card. Richelieu supreme in the Council of France	"Personal glory, territorial aggrandisement, commercial advantage were the motives which led to the great wars of Europe from the Peace of Westphalia (1648) to the Congress of Vienna (1814). Before the fierceness of those appetites the rights of nations, of races, even of humanity itself, weighed not a feather in the balance. . . . It is the triumph of Machiavellianism on the large scale in international politics." — *Periods of European History*, v, London, 1910; pp. 107–8
1625–49	Reign of K. Charles I	
1631	Death of John Donne	Lyric learning and conceits; "metaphysical" or fantastic poetry of the autumn of the Renaissance
1635–65	*Floruerunt* Calderon and Velasquez	The last flower of Spanish culture. Velasquez, the painter, died in 1660; Calderon, the playwright, in 1700
1637	Corneille's (1606–84) tragedy, *le Cid* (founded on a Span. play, 1618, by Guillen de Castro), became storm-centre of the Fr.	"Did more than any other single drama to determine for two centuries the character of the theatre all over the Continent of Europe." — Ticknor, *Hist. Span. Lit.*, ii, 305

Date.	Event.	Remarks.
	Academy's fight for the strict recognition of the three Unities (of Place, Time and Action) in dramatic composition	
	Descartes's (1596–1650) *Discours de la Methode*	"Throughout all Europe the advent of his system caused a revolution in the world of thought, exceptional in its force, its extent, and its duration."—*Cambridge Modern History*, iv, 787
1639	Milton (1608–74)	Close of his first poetic period
1642	Death of Richelieu Death of Galileo	
	Theatres closed in London	The period of Civil War in England, coinciding with Mazarin's premiership in France
1643	Reign of K. Louis XIV began	
1648	Herrick's (1591–1674) *Hesperides*	The Renaissance dies away in England, in less than fully spontaneous lyric verse
1656–7	Blaise Pascal's (1623–62) *Lettres Provinciales*	"In sheer genius Pascal ranks among the very greatest writers." — Strachey, *Landmarks in Fr. Lit.*, London, n.d., p. 58. "Demosthenes is comparable, but by no means superior, to Pascal, whose *Provinciales* are the first masterpiece of classic taste in our prose literature." — Lanson, *Hist. Lit. fr.*, Paris, 1912; p. 463
1659	Molière's (1622–73) *les Précieuses Ridicules*	The first of his greater comedies, which deeply influenced European drama. "If Life is likened to the comedy of Molière, there is no scandal

Date.	Event.	Remarks.
		in the comparison."—George Meredith, *Essay on Comedy*. The whole essay should be read, especially the passage beginning: "Politically, it is accounted a misfortune for France that her nobles thronged to the Court of Louis Quatorze. It was a boon to the comic poet."
1660	The Restoration of the English Monarchy	Waller and Dryden both celebrated the event in verse. When Charles II objected that Waller's Royal Ode was inferior to his Address to Cromwell, the poet adroitly remarked "Poets, Sire, succeed better in fiction than in truth."
	Pepys (1632–1703) began his *Diary*	Opened on 1st January. The year 1660 started in April
1661	Mazarin died. King Louis XIV met his Council on the morrow with the declaration: "Je serai à l'avenir mon premier ministre"	The *grand siècle Louis Quatorze* now opens, and closes in 1715 at the King's death. We may select one testimony out of many: "From the Court of Louis flowed out influences far more potent than those which followed the feet of his soldiers or the coaches of his diplomatists. Versailles set the fashion to the civilized world. French manners, French dress, French speech, French science became the property and models of civilized Europe. . . . There are few kings to whom it has been given to dictate to civilization for a century the principles by which she is to live."—*Periods of European Hist.*, v, London, 1910; p. 192

Date.	Event.	Remarks.
1662	Incorporation of the Royal Society	"Bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can." See p. 91, above
1665–6	Newton's (1642–1727) first discoveries in Mathematics, and Law of Gravitation	
1665–95	*Floruit* Nicolas Boileau (1636–1711)	Wrote *Satires*, 1660–68; *Epîtres*, 1668–77; *Art Poétique*, 1674; translation of Longinus "On the Sublime", 1674, *Lutrin*, 1683; *Réflexions sur Longin*, 1692–4, etc. The lawgiver of Parnassus
1667	Milton's *Paradise Lost*	
1668	Dryden's (1631–1700) *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*	
1669–77	*Floruit* Racine (1639–99)	See p. 148, above, and Appendix VI
1671	Milton's *Paradise Regained* and *Samson*	
1671	Charles Perrault (1628-1703) elected to the Fr. Academy	Here began the dull and stupid controversy, important, however, to literary history, of the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. St Sorlin (1595–1676) had written in 1657 an heroic poem, *Clovis*, on a Carlovingian subject, which broke the strict rules of epic poetry, according to the code of Boileau. (*Paradise Lost* equally broke them.) St Sorlin defended himself valiantly, and his cause was espoused after his death by Perrault, in his *Siècle de Louis le Grand*, 1687, and *Parallèles des anciens et des*

Date.	Event.	Remarks.
		modernes, 1688–97. The contest engaged all the wits of Paris, and Boileau and Perrault were not reconciled till 1700. Meanwhile, the quarrel had passed to England, where Sir Wm. Temple (1628–99) wrote an essay, 1690, on *Ancient and Modern Learning*,[1] out of which sprang the famous Bentley-Boyle controversy about the letters of Phalaris, and the *Battle of the Books*, 1697, by Dean Swift (1667–1745), who had been Temple's secretary. "There was more reason in the debate, and it was conducted at times with more good sense than might be gathered either from Swift's allegory or from some of the impertinences on either side that preceded it. It was the inevitable result of the Revival of Learning; it had gone on for centuries; the splutter of Perrault's fireworks being a minor incident in the contention."—W. P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden*, Oxford, 1900; I, xxii. This legacy of the Renaissance to the seventeenth century was partly settled by Dryden's judicious essays
1672	Joseph Addison born	
1678	Bunyan's (1628–88) *Pilgrim's Progress*, Pt. I	

[1] This essay contained what Saintsbury calls "one of the finest sentences in the English language". It reads: "When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a forward child, that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep; and then the care is over."

Date.	Event.	Remarks.
1687	Newton's *Principia*	
1688	Alexander Pope born	
1689–94	Reign of William and Mary	
1690	Locke's (1632–1704) *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*	"Locke has discovered the human reason to man, just as an excellent anatomist explains the springs of the body."—Voltaire (1694–1778). Locke is an ascendant of the forces which were released in the French Revolution
1690	*Floruerunt* the Restoration Dramatists: Sir George Etherege, 1635 (?)–1691 William Wycherley, 1640 (?)–1714 Sir John Vanburgh, 1666–1726 William Congreve, 1670–1729 George Farquhar, 1678–1707	Mr Bonamy Dobree's monograph on *Restoration Comedy* (Oxford, 1924) fixes its dates between 1660 and 1720. "The morality of the Restoration dramatists," he writes, "taken as a whole, was not a universal vision; it could not be. . . . Modern curiosity was awakening, and the old moral order lay in ruins about the scaffold of a King. The dramatists of that day were almost necessarily forced to be conten twith morality as conceived by the *honnête homme*." Sir Leslie Stephen says: "Nothing is more difficult than to form any trustworthy estimate of the state of morality in a whole nation. . . . What may be fairly inferred, is that a certain class, who had got from under the rule of the Puritan, were now free from legal restraint, and took advantage to indulge in the greater license which suited the taste of their patrons. The result is sufficiently shown when we see so great a man as Dryden

Date.	Event.	Remarks.
		pander to the lowest tastes, and guilty of obscenities of which he was himself ashamed."—*Engl. Lit. and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1904; p. 58
1698	Jeremy Collier's (1650–1721) *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*	

In 1700, when Dryden died, on the edge of this parti-coloured century, which he had influenced so profoundly in his own country, Daniel Defoe [1] was inventing the newspaper-article and Richard Steele [2] the magazine, and the one was enhanced by Jonathan Swift [3] and the other by Joseph Addison. Coffee-houses were flourishing in London: Will's, where Dryden used to sit, at the corner of Russell Street and Bow Street; the Grecian, which Newton visited; the Cocoa-Tree, frequented by the Tories; Child's, where Addison smoked his pipe, and St James's, where he joined the politicians on a Sunday. The literary scene was set for the Augustans, who were to pay back to foreign nations, through the attraction of Crusoe, Gulliver and the *Spectator*, some of the debts incurred in the previous century, and to show the way to the more illustrious achievements of Richardson (born, 1689), Fielding (1717), Johnson (1709), Sterne (1713), Smollett (1721), and the rest of the giants of the eighteenth century. The social movement, started in Paris *salons*, which led to the foundation of the French

[1] 1659 (?)–1731; *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719

[2] 1672–1729; "Isaac Bickerstaff" of *The Tatler*, 1709–11, and associated with Addison (1672–1719) in founding *The Spectator*, 1711.

[3] 1667–1745; *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726.

Academy, was completed by these newspaper-men and clubmen, who founded the English novel. English conditions in this age, which Dryden's critical writings had helped to save from preciousness and periwigs, favoured the consent of public taste. Opinions were better defined, and societies had been founded for their discussion. Communications were easier, and intelligent curiosity was at work. "Whenever I see a cluster of people," wrote Addison in the first number of the *Spectator* (1st March, 1711), "I always mix with them, though I never open my lips but in my own club"; and the genius which invented Sir Roger de Coverley was not exhausted in Thackeray and George Meredith. When Pope died in 1744, Rousseau, who was thirty-two years of age, cared more for the social sentiment of Richardson than for the "correctness" which had been Pope's chief "care". And through Rousseau, as we shall see, Europe drew her breath at the close of the eighteenth century.

Before going forwards, however, let us revisit for a moment Paris in 1641, in order to make sure that we understand the kind of "correctness" which she imposed on the *grand siècle*. It was the year before the Civil War in England, and in the third devastating decade of the Thirty Years War. The French Academy was four or five years old, and in the chief *salon* out of which it grew Charles, Duc de Montausier was making love to Julie de Rambouillet in the *chambre bleue* of her parents' *hôtel*. A rare good lover the duke made, despite the details of neo-classic diction and the laws of *ictus* and *cæsura* which the *salon* prepared for *l'Académie*. Take, for instance, the *Guirlande de Julie*, which the duke presented to his mistress on 1st January, 1641. (Milton's pamphlet—"a Root-and-Branch pamphlet of most tremendous earnestness"[1] —*Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England*

[1] Masson.

was published in May of the same year). The *Guirlande* contained sixty-three poems on twenty-nine vellum leaves, each with a hand-painted border; sixteen were written by Montausier, and among the other contributors was Valentin Conrart, the first secretary of the Academy. There the violet declared to Julie:—

> Fleur sans ambition, je me cache sous l'herbe,
> Modeste en ma couleur, modeste en mon séjour;
> Mais si sur votre front je me puis voir un jour,
> La plus humble des fleurs sera la plus superbe.

And the rose:—

> J'estime beaucoup mieux l'honneur de vous servir,
> Que celui de régner dans l'empire de Flore.

And the angelica:—

> Je porte le nom d'Angélique,
> Mais j'ignore pas qu'au jugement de tous
> Je la suis beaucoup moins que vous.

And the lily:—

> Belle, ces Lys que je vous donne
> Auront plus d'honneur mille fois
> De servir a vôtre couronne
> Que d'être couronnés aux armes de nos rois.

And the tulip, the jonquil, the jasmine, the narcissus, the hyacinth, and the pansy, all brought their meed of adoration to the

> Nymphe adorable,
> Dont les cœurs reçoivent les lois.

We must not crush a posy with a millstone, but these flowers of the exquisite lover (" precious " was the current term, immortalized eighteen years later in Molière's *Précieuses Ridicules*) had never drawn breath in the open air. Far from the fields of warfare in Germany and England, they were remote even from the common fields where Shakespeare had seen the daffodils " take the winds of March with beauty ".

Like Denham's river and "smooth" Waller's grief, Montausier's flowers displayed the conventional, secondary attributes acquired in a looking-glass land. Nature's familiar forms were emptied of their floral nature, and the symbols were recombined in terms more intelligible to urban wit. Pope stated the principle of this poetry in the famous verse, which we have quoted before,

> All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee,

a verse unwritten at last by the "return to Nature" votaries of Rousseau; and the note which "precious" poets could not strike, and which, if struck, they would have deemed inharmonious, may now be illustrated by Meredith's verses:—

> A wonder edges the familiar face:
> She wears no more that robe of printed hours;
> Half-strange seems Earth, and sweeter than her flowers.

For the followers of *bon sens* let go both the physical and the metaphysical. The one was too coarse and the other too fine for their taste. As Pope, again, said in his *Essay on Man*:—

> The bliss of Man (could pride that blessing find)
> Is not to act or think beyond mankind.

Not even, we may add, *among* all mankind. Men were groomed and combed for thought and action. Flowers were no longer plucked from the skirts of the north-wind; the "wet sea-boy" was no longer visited in his "cradle of the rude, imperious surge"; for *la langue reparée* of Malherbe, preceding Boileau,

> N'offrit plus rien de rude à l'oreille épurée.

Ploughboys, garden-boys, grave-diggers, and other sons of the damp earth might pull flowers out of their beds under the sun. Visionaries of every denomination might inform common objects with mystic meanings, till Blake at last should see "a heaven in a wild flower". But in the *chambre bleue* of the Hôtel Rambouillet

" a primrose by a river's brim " was both less and more than a simple primrose. It was *less* than Wordsworth's other primrose,

> A lasting link in Nature's chain,
> From highest Heaven let down ;

it was *more* than Milton's contemporaneous " rathe primrose that forsaken dies ". Montausier's flowers were the blooms of " Nature methodized ", where

> True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd [1];

and the blooms of such botanists were brought to town on dumb waiters of literary design, fashioned long since by the " ancients ", who had reaped by land and by sea, and whose authority was binding on the " moderns ".

The *Guirlande* of 1641 belongs to the same class of poetry as Boileau's *Lutrin* of 1683, and Pope's *Rape of the Lock* of 1712. Its foppish and fashionable flowers are treasured with that lock of hair, where

> Heroes' wits are kept in ponderous vases,
> And beaux' in snuff-boxes and tweezer-cases ;
> There broken vows and death-bed alms are found,
> And lovers' hearts with end of riband bound,
> The courtiers' promises, and sick men's prayers,
> The smiles of wooers, and the tears of heirs,
> Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,
> Dried butterflies, and tomes of casuistry.

Though, perhaps, never meant for posterity, Montausier's fancy will have served its present purpose if it has helped to reveal the kind of influence on literary style and social manners exercised by the purists and pedants for whom " Malherbe arrived " in France. The discipline was salutary and timely. By first pruning the vocabulary and regulating the rhythm of verse and prose, the French Academy trained the taste and chastened the wit of the nation. Their aim

[1] Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 1709.

was " precious ", in the sense of select. The *salons* had their taboos,[1] of course, but France and Europe as a whole would have lost immeasurably in culture if the vogue of the *salons* had been curtailed. For the new " preciousness ", like Euphuism in England, though it ended as a style in need of reform, began as a reform of style. It was designed to bring home to society, distracted by civil and religious wars, the moods and forms of polite address. The teachers wisely called in aid nations more polished than themselves. They went to Spain for their fiction and their drama. They had affinities with the decadents of Spain and Italy: Guevara and Gongora in the one, Guarini and Marino in the other, and, through these, with Greek novelists and pastoral writers. But, with all their " conceits ", they made style, and, besides style, they made thought. The fact that the first forty Academicians, and the authors of the great French Dictionary which they undertook, included the foremost *précieux* of the *salons*—the *chedreux* critics of Dryden's contempt—is an indication of the value of the cult. Jean Chapelain,[2] the initiator of the Dictionary, and a protagonist in the controversy about the *Cid*, spoke of the *salon* as the " touchstone " of the *honnête homme*; and, writing to Jean de Balzac, who was called the Malherbe of French prose, Chapelain said of the *salon* again:—

> We talk there not wisely, but reasonably. There is no place in the world where so much *bon sens* is found combined with so little pedantry.

After all, this was Dryden's quest. The *bon sens des honnêtes gens*, the good form of well-bred folk:

[1] Sir James Frazer, in a note in *The Golden Bough*, mentions " the widespread custom ", among savages, " which forbids certain persons at certain times to make use of the ordinary words for common objects." The extremes of society meet.

[2] 1595–1674.

this almost untranslateable idea, which entered the portals of the French Academy through the *salons* of literate Parisians, was the social creed and philosophic mode which Dryden and Saint-Evremond [1] naturalized in England in Waller's wake, despite the dark counsels of poets who put Naaman's question to the prophet. The reforms might be retarded for a while by too licentious reactionaries from Puritanism, plunging into the restored freedom of the stage, and they might be exaggerated in places by too obsequious adepts of the modern-ancients. Such a place—a *locus classicus* of false classicism—is to be found at the close of Pope's *Essay on Criticism* of 1709. There Vida,[2] an Italian critic of the sixteenth century, whom Chalmers included among his *British Poets*, was exalted to equality with Virgil:—

> Immortal Vida! on whose honoured brow
> The poet's bays and critic's ivy grow :
> Cremona now shall ever boast thy name,
> As next in place to Mantua,[3] next in fame !
> But soon by impious arms from Latium chased,
> Their ancient bounds the banish'd Muses pass'd.
> Thence arts o'er all the northern world advance,
> But critic-learning flourish'd most in France ;
> The rules a nation, born to serve, obeys :
> And Boileau still in right of Horace sways.

[1] " Les plus honnêtes gens du monde," wrote Saint-Evremond (1613–1703), " ce sont les Français qui pensent, et les Anglais qui parlent." I borrow the quotation from W. P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden*, I, xv. St-Evremond, a political exile from Paris after 1661, spent his exile congenially in London, where he formed extensive acquaintance, and was buried, like Dryden, in the Abbey. He lived on the sunny side of the Parnassian way, a cultivated dilettante, with a nice taste in books and wines, and a nice distaste for shoddy and excess.

[2] Marco Giralomo Vida ; died 1566. His Latin *de Arte Poetica*, translated into English by Chas. Pitt, gave him the *entrée* to Chalmers, and was the earliest of the " Follow Virgil " exercises in poetics in Italy.

[3] Virgil was born at Mantua, and Vida at Cremona.

But we, brave Britons, foreign laws despised,
And kept unconquer'd, and uncivilized;
Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold,
We still defied the Romans, as of old.
Yet some there were, among the sounder few
Of those who less presumed and better knew,
Who durst assert the juster ancient cause,
And here restor'd wit's fundamental laws.

So far Pope, yoking England to Boileau's chariot. But Richard Busby, headmaster of Westminster when Dryden was at school, had trained his pupil, as Mulcaster trained Spenser, to that saner appreciation of English values, which evoked, in 1660, the true vision, remarkable in its time, of England's Augustan age. Dryden's welcome to King Charles II, in *Astræa Redux*, concluded:—

And now Time's whiter series is begun,
Which in soft centuries shall smoothly run. . . .
Our nation, with united interest blest,
Nor now content to poise, shall sway the rest. . . .
At home the hateful names of parties cease,
And factious souls are wearied into peace. . . .
Oh, happy age! Oh, times like those alone,
By fate reserved for great Augustus' throne!
When the joint growth of arms and arts foreshow
The world a monarch, and that monarch you.

There is little to add to this sketch. As poet, playwright and critic, Dryden held the future of English literature in solution. It mattered not, as Dr Johnson saw, that he sang the obsequies of Cromwell as tunefully as the Stuart's return. It mattered not, as Sir Leslie Stephen saw, that he succumbed to (and repented) the temptation of writing loose comedies for fashionable audiences. Placed where he was, and *when* he was, he was feeling his way to better things, and he achieved the better things before the end. His dramatic experiments, in heroic couplets (*The Conquest of*

Granada, 1672; *Aurengzebe*, 1676, etc.) and his blank-verse tragedies in imitation of Shakespeare (*All for Love*, 1678; *Don Sebastian*, 1690) were not the best things, perhaps, but they broke up the French heroic novel[1] into more manageable lengths, and so assisted the transition to modern fiction.

More durably valuable, though still not of universal import, were Dryden's great satires in verse, provoked by the politics of his times. These included *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1681, *The Medal*, 1682, and *Mac-Flecknoe* in the same year. They are great in the limited sense (a pathetic sense, properly considered) that they contain passages greatly eloquent, which roll on a full tide of music, though the vessels of controversy are derelict. They prove no contention to-day. The shadow-names of Achitophel and Zimri have usurped the substantial shapes of Shaftesbury and Buckingham, which they were adopted to veil. This is the fate of Juvenal in every age, and Dryden does not escape it because eloquence gilded his polemics. Meanwhile, for their share of present worth, we may refer to Dryden's estimates (1) of Shaftesbury and (2) of Buckingham, who

> in the course of one revolving moon,
> Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon,

which have passed into common possession.

Dryden wrote poems, too, on his religious opinions: *Religio Laici*, 1682, and *The Hind and the Panther*, 1687. The first was his confession of faith as a Protestant layman, in equipoise between Rome and the Deists; the second justified his conversion to the Church of Rome. Here, too, as with the political satires, admiration stops short of complete sympathy. We never share the poet's mind, though, in its local search for final truth, it struck out many noble thoughts

[1] See Appendix VII.

which appeal to permanent conditions. This, in fine, is Dryden's strength in all these writings. He gave style to controversial matters. He looked out at the world from a modern eye, and turned argument into a fine art. We see him at the front of the eighteenth century, in a miniature Academy of his own at Will's, where he gave manners and taste and readiness to a generation too much apt to sit behind thickset hedges of prejudice, fastidiousness, or pompousness. His royal largess of appreciation enlarged, as might be expected, his own resources. He first introduced into English prose the lucid, flexile, dexterous address, which passed from him into the keeping of the founders of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Of his supremacy in criticism we have said enough to prove his place in the century of Boileau among the liberators of Europe: we would quote here the conclusion to his *Apology* (1677) *for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence*, for the sake of its reasonable modesty: "In the meantime I will not run into their fault of imposing my opinions on other men, any more than I would my writings on their taste; I have only laid down, and that superficially enough, my present thoughts, and shall be glad to be taught better, by those who pretend to reform our Poetry."

And Dryden, the suave, grave critic, was also a graceful lyric poet. We may instance his *Annus Mirabilis*: *the Year of Wonders*, 1666, which, despite some Latinism and conceits, achieved its difficult purpose of arresting in eloquent stanzas the remarkable events of a passing year. Such years are rare in a lifetime: men and women in the present generation who have lived through similar experiences will best be able to measure Dryden's achievement. Even more notable was his *Ode in Honour of St Cecilia's Day*, 1697, entitled *Alexander's Feast, or the Power of Musique*. It is immaterial if this ode was composed

in imitation of Pindar; at least it is free from the far-sought figures with which Boileau conscientiously embellished his Pindaric ode *Sur la Prise de Namur*.

> None but the brave deserves the fair.
>
> Sweet is pleasure after pain.
>
> And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew the slain.
>
> And, like another Helen, fired another Troy.
>
> Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
> The diapason closing full on man.

The best measure of these verses is their fame. Everyone knows them and quotes them; and, though more passionate poets have written more intimate verses, they are successful and perfect in their kind.

Cunctando restituit rem: Dryden's service to England in the seventeenth century consisted partly in resistance. He resisted forces which might have overwhelmed an unstable and uncertain generation. The epithet "glorious", which is attached to him, is just: his glory was that he kept an even keel, "the genius of our countrymen, in general," as he said in his *Preface to the Fables*, 1700, "being rather to improve an invention than to invent themselves." Though an admitted master of English prose, "his originality was essentially originality of treatment. . . . What he was not, he at no time made any pretence of being. What he did, he did with the whole strength of one of the most vigorous intellects given to any poet ancient or modern, with constant generosity of effort, and, at the same time, with masculine directness and clear simplicity of purpose. And, though the work of his life is not marble without a flaw, yet the whole structure overtops the expanse of contemporary English literature like the temple shining from the

Sunian height over the sea ".[1] This praise, though lofty, is not too high for the master who " determined the bent of a great literature at a great crisis ".[2]

One feature of Dryden's age, neither French nor English in origin, but common to the literature of both countries, and arising out of common conditions, still remains to be noticed. It is the memoir, diary, or character-study, which led to the revival of historiography by Montesquieu (1689–1755), Gibbon, (1737–94), and others.

Frenchmen, living in the long reign of Louis XIV, which was absolute from 1661 to 1715, grew up to regard it with the feelings of a Victorian Englishman in the last century, as something permanent and even primordial, and it is a Frenchman of our day who has wittily said: " On ne réfléchit pas, au temps du Roi Soleil, que le soleil même a un mouvement ".[3] The law went out from Versailles, and set the standard of taste in manners, morals, arts and letters. Yet there were not wanting men of reflection who watched the course of events with less easy thought of the morrow. Could it last, the sun in its meridian, this splendour of the *grand siècle Louis Quatorze*? and the uneasy question in France stirred a deeper anxiety in England, where the absolutism of the monarchy was interrupted and estopped by civil war. Beneath the glitter of Versailles and St James's, after Charles II had returned to his Court, lay an eager curiosity about events, and a busy tendency, manifest in various directions, to seize the features of the age while it was still in the making.

Molière's *Précieuses ridicules* arrested indelibly a passing fashion, and led in 1661 to his being granted the lease of the future national theatre, where he

[1] Sir A. W. Ward, *Cambridge History of English Literature*, viii, 57.
[2] Professor Churton Collins, *Essays and Studies*, London, 1895, p. 1.
[3] Jusserand, *Ronsard*; Paris, 1913.

impaled the butterflies of the human comedy. The *Grand Cyrus* and *Clélie* of Mlle de Scudéry, which masqueraded as historical fiction, were partly satire and partly portraiture, and elaborate keys have been drawn up identifying the characters in each. Interminably and sometimes maliciously, this acute observer of the life which she shared preserved its characteristics for posterity. The *Maximes* of the sixth Duc de la Rochefoucauld (1613–80), the *Caractères* of Jean de la Bruyère (1645–96), and the *Mémoires* of a dozen writers, including the Cardinal de Retz (1613–79) and the Duc de Saint-Simon (1675–1755), alike exhibit the same taste for character-study, which inspired, among many other examples, the *Contes*, or Tales, of Jean de la Fontaine (1621–95). They might hang their models with disguises: barbaric raiment from the East; shepherds' smocks from a conventional Arcady; costumes from history or mythology; birds' feathers and beasts' skins; but underneath all the trappings of the costumiers, the lay-figures were the men and the women of the day.

It is worth noting that these reflections on the age were not always written for publication. De Retz wrote his memoirs in 1661, but they did not see the light till 1717, when he had been dead nearly forty years. St-Simon died in 1755, and his diaries remained unpublished till 1829. Our own Pepys, who started his journal in 1660, deposited it in his college library, where it rested untouched till 1825. These facts may be taken to illustrate both the veracity and the intimacy of the study which was devoted in the seventeenth century to material for pictures of the times. It was hidden away behind a guise of fiction, or it was dressed in antique robes, or it was distilled through satire or fable, or it was laid by on a shelf.

English literature in the second half of the seventeenth century illustrates almost as richly as its French

neighbour these various types of character-study.[1] Dryden's satires, especially the famous passages from *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1681, presenting Buckingham as Zimri and Shaftesbury as Achitophel, have been mentioned above, and the satiric *Hudibras*, 1663–8, of Samuel Butler belongs to the same generation. Here, however, at the end of that generation, closed by Dryden's death in 1700 and the setting of the Roi Soleil in 1715, and in preparation for the extended use of character-study, which was perfected in the eighteenth century, we would refer more particularly to the distinctive work of Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, who, an exact contemporary of Milton, was born in 1608 and died in 1674. His contemporaneousness was his only likeness, and his career throws a fresh light on the uniqueness and aloofness of Milton. In the stormy days of 1642, Hyde, whose uncle, Sir Nicholas, had been Lord Chief Justice, kept the helm steady for Charles I, and he became Chancellor of the Exchequer in the following year. His long services to Charles II were rewarded by office as Lord Chancellor and by successive steps in the peerage; and, though he suffered impeachment and banishment, he was buried in the Abbey. His daughter, Anne, married the Duke of York, afterwards King James II, and Clarendon, through this union, became grandfather to two Queens of England, Mary II and Anne. No man in a full time was better qualified by fullness of experience to delineate the features of his contemporaries. The representation of manners on the stage, their travesty in satire, their insinuation by fable, their imitation in fiction, and their daily record in sealed diaries: all such modes of study, however much heightened by growing

[1] Reference should be made to *Characters from the Histories and Memoirs of the Seventeenth Century. With an Essay on The Character, and Historical Notes.* By David Nichol Smith. Oxford, 1918.

resources of skill in prose and verse, yield in actuality and interest to the narrative of manners in history by a maker of the history of his own time. This was Clarendon's boon to posterity in a composite series of writings, known as *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, *The History of the Civil War in Ireland*, and the autobiographic *Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon*. Briefly, there were two main works, the *History* of 1646–8, and the *Life* of 1668–70; and, out of those manuscript remains, the writer's sons, Henry, second Earl of Clarendon, and Laurence, first Earl of Rochester, constructed three volumes of *History* in 1702–4 and a volume of the *Life* in 1759.[1] Clarendon spent his years of exile in France, where he may have found the air and soil congenial to his vein of reflection. "On ne réfléchit pas": but we find them reflecting all the time; and, finally, France and England divide the honour of teaching Addison and Richardson the finer art of character-study, which they were to practise and transmit at an early date. The students of human nature, who handed on their researches to their successors, included the diarists and memoirists as well as the satirists and evangelists of the age.

[1] The bibliography is examined definitely in three articles by Professor C. H. Firth, *English Historical Review*, 1904. The property is vested in the University of Oxford.

CHAPTER VII

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

I : *First Half*

THE eighteenth century in English literature, between the passing of Dryden in 1700 and the rise of Byron in 1812, has been less than justly treated by historians. They have tended, till recently[1] at least, to identify it too closely with writers in fee to Boileau, and to neglect or postpone the signs displayed by later and greater writers. The result has been to transfer to the nineteenth century some of the merit due to its predecessor. Thus, Dickens and Thackeray, for example, belong to the nineteenth century, but their art looks back to the novels of Richardson, Smollett, and Fielding: to *Pamela* in 1741, *Roderick Random* in 1748, and *Tom Jones* in 1749. Thus, again, though a " renascence of wonder ", as Watts-Dunton wrote in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, is a poetic mark of the nineteenth century, yet the wonder was not all *re*-born. Berthold Brockes died in 1747, James Thomson in 1748, Edward Young in 1765, Sterne and Winckelmann in 1768, Rousseau in 1778, Diderot in 1784, Klopstock in 1803, and these, too, though they belonged to the eighteenth century, were not without the faculty of wonder.

A part of this misprisal may be traced, indirectly, to a natural tendency not to see the wood of the near past for the trees of the nearer present, and, directly,

[1] See, particularly, Saintsbury, *The Peace of the Augustans*, London, 1916; W. P. Ker, *The Eighteenth Century*, reprinted in *Collected Essays*, London, 1925, from English Association Pamphlet No. 35, July, 1916; and, best of all, the *Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse*, 1926.

to an expression of this tendency in the *Essays in Criticism* of Matthew Arnold.[1] Invaluable as those essays were, and are, in stimulating literary appreciation, they cannot altogether be acquitted of a measure of unfairness to the eighteenth century. We may quote from "The Literary Influence of Academies" Arnold's view of the sequel to "the literature of genius stretching from Marlowe to Milton. What did it lead us to?" he asked, and he answered his own question by the words: "To our provincial and second-rate literature of the eighteenth century." His partial vision of that century may be judged from another of the essays. "The age of Dryden," he wrote, "together with our whole eighteenth century which followed it, sincerely believed itself to have produced poetical classics of its own, and even to have made advance, in poetry, beyond all its predecessors." But he wrote down its claim as follows: "We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century." The trouble is that Dryden died in 1700, and Pope in 1744; the one before the century had well begun, the other before it was half done. They were by no means "our whole eighteenth century": we mentioned some of its major names above; and Arnold's epithets for the literature of that age, "provincial and second-rate," "excellent and indispensable" (like a tried retainer or a maiden aunt), are the more unfortunate because they have stuck. Matthew Arnold's strength lay in his epithets; again and again, like his model, Ste-Beuve,[2] he hit with happy precision the *mot juste*,

[1] 1822–88. *Essays in Criticism*, First Series, 1865; Second Series, 1888.

[2] 1804–69; *Causeries du Lundi*, from 1850 onwards, in French journals.

and we regret accordingly that he should have characterized the whole century before his own by words not fully applicable even to the first half of it.

Dryden and Pope have much less in common than Arnold implied by his remark about the "age of prose and reason". What was chiefly common to them was their resolve to turn Virgil and Homer into good, modern English heroic verse (not prose): Dryden's Virgil was published in 1697, and Pope's Homer between 1715 and 1726, and it is at least worth noting in this context, that, when four English scholars[1] in the nineteenth century made a fresh attempt to translate the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, they chose prose, not poetry, as their medium. Pope, much more than Dryden, who thought and reasoned for himself, and who was sound—almost originally so in his day—in his views on Chaucer and Shakespeare, belonged by temperament and training to the French reign in England. He learned his criticism from Boileau, and his philosophy from Bolingbroke,[2] who, renowned as Disraeli's precursor in Tory democratic politics, had spent nine years in exile in France, and poured into Pope's receptive ears, as his neighbour in Middlesex, the exact, smooth views on the universe, which made the music of the *Essay on Man* in 1733. Pope was the last of the absolutists in literature, a paladin of King Louis XIV, a satellite of the Roi Soleil, and, by his stricter allegiance to the *fleur-de-lys*, he was less representative of English genius in the eighteenth century.

"The expansion of England in the New World and Asia," we are told, "is the formula which sums

[1] Andrew Lang, Walter Leaf, Ernest Myers, and S. H. Butcher.

[2] Henry St John, first Viscount Bolingbroke, 1678–1751. Like Pope, his disciple and ardent admirer, he belonged to the first half of the century.

up for England the history of the eighteenth century ".[1] We may read Pope's poetry from start to finish without discovering any passage in support of this brilliant generalization. Nor shall we find in it any sign of the temper in which, in 1768, the house and machinery of James Hargreaves, who invented the spinning-jenny, were wrecked by a mob[2]; nor yet of the " simple annals of the poor " of Gray's *Elegy* in 1751; nor of the pressure of their problems in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, 1766. Pope's greatness as a poet lay in his unrivalled success in interpreting to a generation in search of order, for its conduct, criticism, and other affairs of life, the best available rescripts and rules, and in presenting his interpretation in polished paragraphs of regular verse, glittering with epigrammatic ornaments, more and more ingeniously arising out of the construction of the heroic couplet. But we do not detract from that success—the more delightful in contrast with " free verse "—if we add that it imposed its own limitations. The thought, like the verse, " n'osa enjamber." The " criticism of life ", in Arnold's well-known phrase, regulated the life which it criticized. Thus, Pope's *Essay on Man*, from beginning to end, expelled the natural man of the eighteenth century, who was gradually articulating his self-expression. We need quote but a few verses in support:—

> Then say not Man's imperfect, Heaven in fault;
> Say rather Man's as perfect as he ought:
> His knowledge measured to his state and place.
>
> The bliss of Man (could pride that blessing find)
> Is not to act or think beyond mankind;

[1] Seeley, *Expansion of England*. London, 1883, p. 28.

[2] The word itself was new. Addison, in *The Spectator*, 4th August, 1711, had quoted the use of " mob " for " mobile " as an instance of the miserable practice of docking words of all but a single syllable. " Bus " for " omnibus ", with its plural " buses " is a modern instance.

No powers of body or of soul to share,
But what his nature or his state can bear.

All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
A partial evil, universal good.

Know, then, thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is Man.

Order is Heaven's first law; and this confest,
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,
More rich, more wise.

What was there in these negations and incuriousnesses to satisfy a generation reaching out to the solution of new problems of empire and industry? There was not enough to keep a rabbit-warren placid. Even a rabbit, one imagines, has sometimes to act or think beyond its kind. Contrast this vision with that of another poet in the same decade. The *Essay on Man* was written in 1733. In 1734–6, James Thomson, to whom we shall come back, wrote a poem, unworthy of his genius, which he called *Liberty*, in five Parts. From Part V we may quote some verses, which indicate that Thomson at his worst knew more of the movement of the eighteenth century than Pope and Bolingbroke, meditating happiness. Thomson sees a vision of the future, when it will be the chief delight of kings

In just proportion to give general joy.
. . . Another race
Of generous youth, of patriot sires, I see,
Not those vain insects fluttering in the blaze
Of court, and ball, and play. . . .
See, social labour lifts his guarded head,
And men not yield to government in vain. . . .
The winds and seas are Britain's wide domain; . . .
Lo! swarming southward on rejoicing suns
Gay colonies extend; the calm retreat

> Of undeserved distress, the better home
> Of those whom bigots chase from foreign lands.
> Not built on rapine, servitude and woe,
> And in their turn some petty tyrant's prey,
> But, bound by social freedom, firm they rise. . . .
> No starving wretch the land of freedom stains ;
> If poor, employment finds ; if old, demands,
> If sick, if maimed, his miserable due ;
> And will, if young, repay the fondest care.

Poor verse, perhaps, even if we remember that Thomson wrote "Rule, Britannia!", but not "provincial and second-rate", and certainly little or no poorer than the arid passages in Wordsworth, who owed so much to Thomson's lead. We shall come to that debt and others, and to Thomson's better verse in *The Seasons* and elsewhere. Here we are concerned to point out that the French "age of prose and reason", so deftly versified by Pope, is very far from the whole story of the eighteenth century in English literature. For here, at the very height of Pope's triumph, is English poetry closely corresponding to Seeley's formula for the century—"the expansion of England in the New World"; here is the plea for social betterment and a national conscience—repeated by Wordsworth years afterwards in the Ninth Book of *The Excursion*, and extending to the Old Age Pensions Acts of our own day; and here is the justification, by anticipation, of the mob-law which rose against James Hargreaves and spread into the French Revolution. The liberty of "social labour" and the bond of "social freedom" were not to be let go by English poets.

The eighteenth century, viewed as a whole, is revealed as the most original epoch in the history of English literature. Chaucer, we saw, depended on Boccaccio and Petrarch, and trained his aspiring muse on the French *Romance of the Rose*. Spenser definitely

ranged himself with Ariosto and Tasso, and their ancient classical exemplars. Elizabethan dramatists, as Shakespeare himself said, relied upon Seneca and Plautus,[1] and wrote sonnets *al italico modo*; the soul of Machiavelli flew into Marlowe, and the soul of Ovid into Shakespeare, who transformed by his genius the story-plots of Greek Plutarch, English chroniclers, and Italian *novelle*-writers. Milton emulated Tasso, and confided in youth to an old man, who had been Tasso's intimate friend, that he hoped to write an English epic on a British theme. Pope was Boileau's "sedulous ape". But we reach a new phase in the mid-eighteenth century: the phase of psychology and feeling, the phase of the character-essay and the social novel The heroic poem is down and out. It had held Europe in thrall for several centuries. Even Dryden, in 1693, declared that "an Heroic Poem is certainly the greatest work of human nature"; and, again, in his dedication of the *Æneid*, 1697: "A Heroic Poem, truly such, is undoubtedly the greatest work which the soul of man is capable to perform." But we do not hear of it again in the eighteenth century. Men of letters found other works to perform than to overgo Ariosto or to soar above the Olympian hill. The Trojan War, King Arthur's Twelve Battles, and the Chivalry of Charlemagne, were no longer the only matters at the free disposal of a poet. The "Gothic" tradition, as it came to be called, was passed through the crucible of "classical" taste. This was partly the bounty of Joseph Addison,[2] in his weekly musings in the

[1] "For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men."—*Hamlet*, II, ii, 421.

[2] 1672–1719. See, particularly, in his *Pleasures of the Imagination*, the distinction, with which we may or may not concur, but which was novel at the time, and which was transferred from architecture to literature: "Let anyone reflect on the disposition of mind in which

Spectator; partly the influence of "The Sublime", translated by Boileau in 1674 from an Italian version of the Greek treatise by Longinus[1]; and partly—mostly, perhaps—the result of external conditions. We may notice some signs of these in the Bill of Rights of 1689, which placed taxation and a standing army within the discretion of Parliament, and secured the principles of free speech and free elections; in the foundation of the Bank of England in 1694, and the beginning of the National Debt; in the Triennial Parliaments Act of the same year; in the Navy Acts of 1696, 1700, and 1706, when Sir Clowdisley Shovell was Admiral of the Fleet; in the Act of Union of 1707, and the South Sea Company of 1711—all signs of a national consciousness, summarized for students of the eighteenth century by two leading authorities on that epoch:—

> (1) The centre of the Classical balance tended in France constantly to move towards Authority, in England towards Liberty. . . . In England the element of Romance has only been subdued by the spirit of the Classical Renaissance: it has not been destroyed; and in the course of events, with the natural expansion of society, we shall see the medieval element in the latter half of the eighteenth century once more exerting an active influence on the progress of English poetry.[2]
>
> (2) As the social changes in the eighteenth century give new influence to the middle classes and then to the democracy, the aristocratic class, which represented the culture of the opening stage, is gradually pushed aside; its methods become

he finds himself at his first entrance into the Pantheon at Rome, and consider how little in proportion he is affected with the inside of a Gothic cathedral, though it be five times larger than the other."

[1] Greek rhetorician of the third century A.D. He was known as Longinus till 1808, when the name was discovered to be conjectural.

[2] W. J. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry*, v, 18–19; London, 1905.

antiquated, and its conventions cease to represent the ideals of the most vigorous part of the population.[1]

The difference was that, when society had expanded and these social changes had been successfully accomplished, English literature came back to its former moorings, purged by its immersion in French taste. The first half of the eighteenth century, if it had done nothing more, had taught poets and their critics to distinguish between Romantic (Gothic) and Classical values. They made at last too much of the distinction. Keats was wrong, in *Sleep and Poetry*, in 1817, to rail so bitterly at the poets of the eighteenth century:—

> Ye were dead
> To things ye knew not of—were closely wed
> To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
> And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
> Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
> Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
> Their verses tallied. . . . They went about,
> Holding a poor, decrepid standard out,
> Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large
> The name of one Boileau!

England's debt to Boileau and Pope, and to Dryden intervening between the two, is not to be measured by this cry. The original work of English men of letters in the eighteenth century was facilitated by the training which they outgrew. They went to school with classical masters—the "dolts" of Keats's disdain—and derived from that discipline better methods of Romantic expression. The very metre of *Sleep and Poetry* was that of the *Essay on Man*.

We might illustrate this proposition in several ways. A very satisfactory way is to measure the new phase of English literature by what it gave back to the Continent. England, in her literary relations,

[1] Sir L. Stephen, *Engl. Lit. and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 218; London, 1904.

became a creditor- instead of a debtor-country. Take her relations with Germany, for example. We observed in the Table in the last Chapter the effects of the Thirty Years War (1618–48) in repressing the culture of that puissant nation for three generations. We reach at last the close of the fallow years. The Peace of Utrecht of 1713, however poor as an instrument for averting war, did give a tranquil interval to exhausted Europe. It coincided with the accession in Prussia of Frederick William I, whose claim to the title of King, assumed in 1701 by the last Elector of Brandenburg, was recognized by the signatories to the Treaty. The new King *de jure* reigned from 1713–40, when he was succeeded by Frederick the Great, the hero of the Seven Years War; and though Schiller[1] wrote of that Prince that the German muse "went unprotected and without honour" from his throne, Schiller's greater contemporary, Goethe,[2] declared more plausibly and even more truly: "The first genuine and higher self-consciousness came into German poetry through Frederick the Great and the Seven Years War." Frederick it was, despite his French tastes and his famous friendship with Voltaire, who moulded broken Germans into a nation, in the sense that "Deutschland found Prussia; a solid and living State round which the Teutonic people should consolidate itself".[3] We are not concerned here with the remoter fruits of that consolidation; we are writing literary, not political history; but, while we note that it was an Englishman (or, more precisely, a Scotsman) who wrote the standard history of Frederick and his times, we should note, too, that the German muse, which that King left "schutzlos, ungeehrt", but which yet drew "higher self-consciousness" from his Teutonism, rallied first

[1] 1759–1805. [2] 1749–1832.
[3] Carlyle, *History of Frederick the Great*, xx, 13.

to the call of English writers. Even before Voltaire's episode at Potsdam, which occurred about 1750, English voices had been wooing the neglected muse, and rousing it out of its slough of despond to a vision of Olympus and even of Sinai.

It is worth while, in judging the eighteenth century, to consider in more detail the beneficent influence of English on German literature. It was a German historian who wrote: "How powerful and rapid must the development have been, which produced a Goethe and a Schiller within a bare hundred years of the tumid bombast of a Lohenstein".[1] Lohenstein died in 1683, four years after his master, Hoffmanswaldau, and both represented what is called the Second Silesian school of turgid, tropical, gallant fiction. Lessing died in 1781, and the flourishing-time of Goethe and Schiller may be placed about 1794. These were Germany's "bare hundred years", and if English men of letters may fairly claim any share in stimulating her national development, modestly described as "powerful and rapid", it can but increase the mutual respect of both great countries.

What are the facts of that literary relationship, based, it is not fanciful to add, on scraps of paper which can never be torn up? We submit a few of the names and dates in the period of English stimulation:

Richard Steele, 1672–1729 .	*The Tatler*	Founded, 1709
Joseph Addison, 1672–1719 .	*The Spectator*	Founded, 1711
Daniel Defoe, *c.* 1659–1731 .	*Robinson Crusoe*	1719
	The Review	Founded, 1704
Jonathan Swift, 1667–1745 .	*Gulliver's Travels*	1726
James Thomson, 1700–48 .	*The Seasons*	1726–40
John Dyer, 1700–58 . .	*Grongar's Hill*	1727
Samuel Richardson, 1689–1761	*Pamela*	1740
Edward Young, 1683–1765 .	*Night Thoughts*	1742–5

[1] Diese, *Deutsche Litteraturgeschichte*, i, 429.

These are enough to go on with. We omit, at one end, Pope's *Pastorals* of 1709, and, at the other, the *Essay*, 1748, *Concerning Human Understanding*, by David Hume, the Scottish moral philosopher (1711–76). Each omission is, perhaps, a little arbitrary, and other additions might be made—Gray's *Elegy*, for instance, of 1751. But we have sought to include only what may be called key-pieces—books, that is, which open new doors, if not directly, like two casements of Keats, on " faery lands forlorn " or " to let the warm love in ", yet at least on spaces of experience untravelled by disciples of Boileau. The praises of these books need not be rehearsed: they are the commonplaces of literary appreciation; the least well known, perhaps, is *Grongar Hill*, and we may introduce it by Wordsworth's opinion of Dyer's later poem, *The Fleece*, 1757: " In point of *imagination* and purity of style, I am not sure that he is not superior to any writer in verse since the time of Milton." For the rest, we are in the presence of new masterpieces. The periodical press, Gulliver, Crusoe, the forces released by Thomson and Young, and the " Familiar Letters from a beautiful young Damsel " of the middle-classes " to her Parents ", would have impregnated much more barren soil than that which Lohenstein had been ploughing with a tired team of Italian concettists. They fell on that soil like healing dew.

The *Spectator*, first. In 1721, two young teachers at Zurich, Bodmer (born 1698) and Breitinger (1701), each of whom, by their godfathers' fancy, had been christened Johann Jakob, whence they sometimes signed themselves J.J.J.J., started a literary review, which they called *Diskurse der Maler*, or Painters' Discourses. The " painters " were really manner-painters, students of character, like Steele and Addison, *Sittenmalerei* being good German for psychology,

and Horace's tag, "ut pictura, poesis," was also remembered in the name. But these details, and the young critics' opposition to the Professor of Poetry at Leipsic University, Johann Christoph Gottsched, who has been described as "an apostle not so much even of classicism as of that hopeless *prosaism* to which classicism lent itself but too readily",[1] are less significant than the evidence of the *Spectator* model. Leipsic was alarmed at Zurich's Anglophil tendencies, and these apprehensions were justified when Bodmer, in 1732, issued a prose-translation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, of which Addison had revealed the sublimity. It was all on the wrong tack for Gottsched, who replied with an *Art of Poetry*, convicting Ariosto, Tasso and Milton of grave crimes against the epic law. But in 1748, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, then aged 24, published the first three cantos of his Miltonic epic, "The Messiah," in another anti-Leipsic journal, the *Bremer Beiträge*. Wieland, then 15 years old, said it beat Homer and Virgil, and, inferentially, Tasso and Milton. Goethe, when he was twenty-five, made his Werther and Lotte call on the name of Klopstock, rather in the fashion of the expletive "Great Scott!", as a complete expression of romantic awe; and Wordsworth and Coleridge, we remember, aged respectively 28 and 29, visited Klopstock with solemn reverence in his honoured old age. Thus, the *Messias* was a young men's poem, but Germany was growing youthful at that date, and the *Bremer Beiträge*, like the *Diskurse*, was founded by young men. Christian Gellert, born in 1715, Adolf Schlegel, born in 1721, and Johann Ebert, born in 1723, were among them; and Ebert translated Young's *Night Thoughts*, Gellert wrote a Richardsonian novel, and Schlegel was one of the elders of a romantic dynasty.

[1] G. Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*, ii, 555.

Next, Crusoe. German imitations of Defoe were so frequent as to invent the name of *Robinsonaden* to describe them. The first direct translation was ready in 1720, and ran through five editions in that year; Johann Gottfried Schnabel's *Insel Felsenburg* was published in four volumes between 1731 and 1743; it had a hero who was driven abroad by the terrors of the Thirty Years War, and founded ideal colonies on a distant island; and Ludwig Tieck,[1] a sort of Lake poet of Germany, who translated Shakespeare in collaboration with A. W. Schlegel, re-issued the *Insel* in six volumes, with an Introduction. Thus, *Robinson Crusoe* was a romantic cornerstone.

It would be tedious to pursue these particularities, and usurious to insist on the obligation, which was very amply repaid. But we may draw up a tentative list of German writers in the first half of the eighteenth century who responded to the stimulus of the English writers in the former list. The contemporary influence of France should be borne in mind, and it must not be assumed that the stimulation amounted to direct imitation:—

Name.	Born.	Remarks.
Berthold Heinrich Brockes	1680	Wrote "Earthly Pleasure in God," in 9 vols., 1721–48, and translations from Pope, *Windsor Forest*, and Thomson, *The Seasons*
Johann Jakob Bodmer	1698	See *supra*. His prose-version of *Paradise Lost*, 1732, was a milestone on the road to Klopstock
Johann Jakob Breitinger	1701	See *supra*. His treatise on poetics, 1740, joined issue with the Classicists at Leipsic

[1] 1773–1853.

Name.	Born.	Remarks.
Friedrich von Hagedorn	1708	Resided in London, 1729. Wrote "Fables and Tales in Verse," 1738, in the vein of La Fontaine, and is a forerunner of Wieland
Albrecht von Haller	1708	Naturalist; student of J. Thomson. Wrote "Poems", 1732, containing one on the Alps, which helped to repair the sense of mountain-scenery, and of the "wonderful" in nature
Christian Ewald von Kleist	1715	Planned a long poem, *Landlust*, of which only one part, "Spring," was completed, in the Thomson-Brockes succession. Met a soldier's death, 1759
Christian Furchtgott Gellert	1715	See *supra*. Wrote "Fables and Tales", 1748, and a Richardsonian "Life of the Swedish Countess of G—", 1747–8
Johann Elias Schlegel	1718	Shakespearean critic; playwright
Johann Peter Uz	1720	Known as the German Horace. There was a little school of Anacreontics at this period, to which J. W. L. Gleim (born 1719) and Hagedorn (*supra*) also belonged, and which, though not very distinguished, marked again the revolt from Gottsched at Leipsic
Johann Adolf Schlegel	1721	See *supra*. Brother of J. E. S., and father of the greater brothers, August Wilhelm and Friedrich
Johann Arnold Ebert	1723	See *supra*. An Anacreontic; translated Young's *Night Thoughts*
Justus F. W. Zachariä	1723	Another deserter from Gottsched

We stop here. The last date brings us direct to the birth of Klopstock, 1724, Lessing, 1729, and Wieland, 1733; and from these it is only a few years, well filled with eminent names and works, to Goethe, 1749, and Schiller, 1759.

Still in the first half of the eighteenth century we might extend the inquiry to the theatre. The discovery of Shakespeare, which we noted on page 71, in relation to Voltaire's stage, was a prime factor in the German *Aufklärung*, or Enlightenment. Gottsched on his lonely Saxon throne, from which there were more and more deserters, sustained the academic standard, hung with its flimsy mottoes, of Shakespeare's illegitimacy as a playwright. Shakespeare did not conform with the law of Leipsic, derived through Boileau from Italian Aristotelians. But Elias Schlegel, anticipating his greater nephews, replied with a defence of Shakespeare's method, or absence of doctrine, which led directly to Lessing's appreciation early in 1759.[1] Wieland was a student of English letters before he began in 1762 his prose-translation of Shakespeare's plays, and, generally, we may say, that in Germany, as in England, under the protection of Dryden and Addison, an appreciation of Shakespeare and Milton, in a generation which sought to convict both of unpoetic practices, was potent in building the nation's literature.

Moreover, there was English drama outside Shakespeare. The social milieu of the English stage was reclaimed from the Restoration dramatists, and from the convention of Seneca and the Elizabethans.

[1] Reference is due here to the English critic, Bishop Richard Hurd (1720–1808), whose edition of Horace's *Ars Poetica* appeared in 1749, and was followed in 1751 by a critical edition of the *Epistola ad Augustum*, which was translated into German. Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 1762, belong to the second half of the century.

Molière's way was not neglected by George Lillo[1] and Edward Moore,[2] who together invented a type of domestic tragedy, which brought down the heroic to common life. What Richardson was effecting for the novel, and what George Crabbe at a slightly later date was to effect for pastoral poetry, Lillo and Moore effected for the tragic stage. The "London 'Prentice" and the "lower life" of Lillo's themes spread their attractions abroad. They gave rise to fate-plays in Germany, the first of which was Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson*, 1755, by which the pit was dissolved in floods of tears, and in France they helped to invent the *drame domestique* or *larmoyante*. Even so vast a genius as Denis Diderot (1713–84), founder of the *Encyclopédie* and the Encyclopedists, wrote dramas and dramatic criticism directly indebted to Lillo's stage, and novels inspired by Richardson; and his slightly older contemporary, Pierre de Marivaux (1688–1763), playwright, novelist, and Addisonian journalist, incurred a debt to English writers, which he returned with interest to Oliver Goldsmith (1728–84).

What was there so new and contagious in English literature in the first half of the eighteenth century? In what did its originality consist? Some reply must be found to these questions, if we are to appreciate the literature of the second half.

The chief element is that of restored surprise. The French rule looked to the expected. If we turn back to Malherbe for a moment, and to the reforms which Boileau dated from his advent, we are struck by the prominence of this feature. Malherbe was the first French writer to bring out the power of a

[1] 1693–1739. Produced *George Barnwell*, 1731 ("A London 'Prentice ruin'd is our theme"), and *Fatal Curiosity*, 1736 ("From lower life we draw our scene's distress").

[2] 1712–57.

word in its right place ; he reduced the muse to rules of duty; no jarring note fell on the accustomed ear; not a syllable ventured to stray. This perfection of technical expectedness was transferred, as we saw, to the conduct of life. We need not go beyond Waller and Denham, whom we quoted in Chapter V, for evidence to this aspiration. "Reason triumphs so," said Waller to Lord Northumberland,

> Over all passions, that they ne'er could grow
> Beyond their limits in your noble breast,
> To harm another, or impeach your rest.
> This we observed, delighting to obey
> One who did never from his great self stray;

and Denham wanted to flow, like the Thames,

> Though deep, yet clear ; though gentle, yet not dull ;
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full.

There was no surprise in these admirable counsels, no room for the unexpected, the *imprévenu*. Defoe checked this complacency with adventure, and Swift with irony—each a salutary test, and Byron employed both weapons. *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719, and *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726, create an illusion of reality, which pricked the contentment of an urbane generation, much as Byron was to prick it in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, 1812; and we may observe that Byron prefixed to the first canto of that poem a quotation from a Frenchman's essay, dated 1753: "The world is a kind of book, of which we have only read the first page when we have seen only our own country. I have turned over a large number, which I have found equally bad. This scrutiny has not been unfruitful. I hated my country. All the inamenities of the various peoples among whom I lived have reconciled me to it." Crusoe and Gulliver, we may add, were the pioneers in the eighteenth century of a long line of apprentices to experience, culminating in Goethe's

Wilhelm Meister. It was experience of cities and ideas excluded from the vision of Boileau in Paris and of Pope in Twickenham; experience, as Walter Pater said of Wordsworth, and as he might have said even of Thomas Gray in 1751, "enlarging so strangely the bounds of humble churchyards, and breaking such a wild light on the graves of christened children"; experience, not of Montausier's painted flowers, or of the "printed hours" of George Meredith's description, but of James Thomson's "living herbs, profusely wild", and of William Blake's "eternity in an hour", at the century's end; the experience which made the "Genius Years" of Germany, her *Geniezeit*, or *Sturm und Drang*, as it is called. Roughly, the boundaries of this time are 1765 and 1790, and, while its remoter ancestor was Shakespeare, it looked directly for authority to Jean-Jacques Rousseau,[1] who unfolded the valleys of the Alps, and laid us in nature's lap, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, was a potent force in politics and letters. Rousseau was the Petrarch of the new age; and his influence, which expressed itself permanently in moral, social and philosophic thought, was founded, partly, at least, on the return from *reason* to *feeling*, shyly but surely explored, with increasing value to human conduct, by English writers in the second quarter of the eighteenth century; and he was deeply impressed by *Robinson Crusoe*.

We must not split the century into segments, but if we can seize this idea of the substitution of one sanction for another, of relying on *feeling*, with its surprises and exceptions, instead of on *reason*, with its fatality and rules, we shall better understand its originality. Lavater,[2] the German preacher and philosopher, described the *Genie* of his own times as "super-Nature, super-Art, super-Learning, super-

[1] 1712–78. [2] 1741–1801.

Talent, self-life", and the last epithet approximates to the idea. It was a time for testing what had been accepted, and for accepting fresh discoveries, however strange: a time for wonder, for philosophy. But, because the Academy in France and the growth of public opinion in England had combined to set standards of knowledge, and to rebuke ungoverned curiosity, this wonder submitted itself to voluntary discipline. Rousseau (in places), and the authors of the *Sturm und Drang*, and, in politics, the French revolutionaries, grew restive under such discipline, and finally rejected its yoke. But its early makers explored by law, and one of the most important of those explorers was Johann Joachim Winckelmann,[1] whose studies of Greek art depended patiently on the foot-rule and the spade. He had feeling, and wonder, and enthusiasm; he saw for himself, and revised older judgments; he was a Romanticist gleaning in classical fields; but, with all his discoverer's zeal, which has been compared with that of the navigators in the sixteenth century, Winckelmann tolerated no unproved conclusion. He *felt with reason*, we may say. His hand and eye, thus freshly employed, obeyed instruments which could register and correct, and so, as has been finely said, "he drew from his own intellectual interest a fullness of passionate life, which Rousseau and Goethe alone among the writers of their century can be said to have approached"[2]: a Romantic-Classic, confounding all the critics' categories.

They struck notes which we do not expect, these young seekers of a passionate life, of feeling in an age of convention. Take Albrecht von Haller, for example, and his "Elegy on the Death of his beloved Mariana". He was twenty years younger than Pope, but it was not from Pope that he learned to invoke her memory with the cry

[1] 1717–68. [2] C. E. Vaughan, *The Romantic Revolt*, p. 195.

Nicht Reden, die das Witz gebieret,
Nicht Dichter-Klagen fang ich an;
Nur Seufzer, die ein Herz verlieret,
Wann es sein Leid nicht fassen kann.

(I attempt no words coined by Wit, no poetic lament; only sighs released by a heart that cannot contain its own sorrow.) Sighing, and even weeping, became a *pleasurable* feeling, in the epoch of excessive sentimentality which opened out of the conventions of "Wit". Richardson's novels indulged this taste, which was directly encouraged by visible incitements to various forms of emotion, scattered among the gardens of the English countryside. Temples, grottoes, hermitages, and so forth, dedicated to love, friendship, melancholy, and similar abstract qualities, instructed the bystander what to feel, and even how to give voice to his feeling. Here he was to suspire, here lovers were to exchange vows of constancy, here a fire of devotion was to be kindled. Salomon Gessner, a fragile labourer in the shadow of the rock of Klopstock, wrote that "the scenes in which the poet delineates the simple beauties of uncorrupted nature are endeared to us by the likeness we fancy we perceive in them to the most blissful moments that we have ourselves enjoyed". Thus was invented what Ruskin[1] called the "pathetic fallacy", which transfers qualities of the object to the subject; and, though he scolded it as morbid and weak, it sprang out of a real desire to return to nature from artifice, to the country from the town, and to establish the truth of the unity of nature, including man. Out of a hundred examples, we select one from Joachim Spalding, who was born in 1714, and who wrote a more or less philosophic treatise on the *Bestimmung* (natural disposition) of mankind: "I open eye and ear, and through these orifices pleasures flow into my

[1] 1819–1900. See *Modern Painters*, part iv, chap. 12.

soul. How indifferent, tasteless, and dead is all the fanciful glamour of artificial splendour and luxury in comparison with the living radiance of the garment of nature. What joy, repose and awe I feel before a field in flower, a purling stream, or the majesty of night. Even the meanest and most familiar objects give me unending delight, when I feel them with a heart attuned to joy." So Wordsworth wrote in 1803,

> Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
> Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
> To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

We have mentioned Klopstock more than once, and have indicated his debt to the school led by "J.J.J.J." out of Leipsic to Zurich. A contemporary letter about him tells us as much as we could learn from pages of his forgotten *Messias*: "He will paint and paint nature. For this he must be acquainted with her. This is why he loves her so well. This is why he strays by the brook and weeps. This is why, in spring, he goes out into the field of blossoms, and his eyes run with tears. All creation fills him with yearning and delight. He goes from mountain to valley, like a man in a dream. When he sees a stream, he follows its course; a hill, he must climb it; a river, oh, if he could rush down with it to the sea! . . . He goes by moonlight to visit the graves, and ponder death, immortality, eternity. He sees everything in relation to something else. Every visible object has an invisible companion, so ardently, so fully, so closely does he feel it all".[1] Words become edged, again, in the sense of Meredith's vision of earth:—

[1] The letter-writer was Karl Fr. Cramer, 1752–1807, who left the Chair of Philosophy at Kiel to follow the revolution in Paris. His father, J. A. Cramer, 1723–88, founded an Addisonian *Aufseher* (Spectator).

Then at new flood of customary morn,
Look at her through her showers,
Her mists, her streaming gold,
A wonder edges the familiar face;

and sunshine and moonlight—particularly moonlight, with its romantic associations of night and death—acquired sentimental as well as chemical attributes. *Schwärmerei*, *Wehmuth*, *Waldeinsamkeit*, and the *Mondbeglänzte Zaubernacht* of Ludwig Tieck[1]: these words all belong to the eighteenth century; to its second half, perhaps, more than to its first; but the sensibility to which they appealed, however tentatively and under reserve, was a mark of the earlier writers.

Defoe denuded man, at a stroke, of the insignia of civilized being, and threw him, bare and unprovided, on an inhospitable, uninhabited island. "I was now landed and safe on shore," related Robinson Crusoe (1719), "and began to look up and thank God that my life was saved in a case wherein there was some minutes before scarce any room to hope. I believe it is impossible to express to the life what the ecstacies and transports of the soul are, when it is so saved, as I may say, out of the very grave. I walked about on the shore, lifting up my hands, and my whole being, as I may say, wrapt up in the contemplation of my deliverance, making a thousand gestures and motions which I cannot describe, reflecting upon all my comrades that were drowned, and that there should not be one soul saved but myself; for, as for them, I never saw them afterwards, or any sign of them, except three of their hats, one cap, and two shoes that were not fellows." The catalogue of effects

[1] 1773–1853. The words are hard to translate. They mean, approximately, youthful enthusiasm, yearning-longing, forest-solitude, witchery of moonlit night. Tieck coined the word *Waldeinsamkeit* to express the German's sense of Rousseau's discovery of tree-impressionism.

is exact, but the situation is romantic in its unexpectedness; and Crusoe, thus bared to his own resources, is assisted only by "Friday", the primitive man in *puris naturalibus*, who became an object of education to Rousseau.

Swift stripped man, flake by flake, of the artificial coverings of civilization, which had been the pride and ambition of the age and Court of Louis XIV, and left him exposed to the Unexpected, to the surprise of his dismissal by the Houyhnhnms. Man, in the panoply of wit and reason, was not fit for the society of decent horses. We recall for a moment what George Meredith wrote of Louis's Court, in connexion with the comedy of Molière :—

> Politically, it is accounted a misfortune for France that her nobles thronged to the Court of Louis Quatorze. It was a boon to the comic poet. He had that lively quicksilver world of the animalcule passions, the huge pretensions, the placid absurdities, under his eyes in full activity; vociferous quacks and snapping dupes, hypocrites, posturers, extravagants, pedants, rose-pink ladies and mad grammarians, sonneteering marquises, high-flying mistresses, plain-minded maids, interthreading as in a loom, noisy as at a fair.

The spectacle which served Molière for comedy moved Swift to savage and bitter irony. In chapter x of part iv of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) occurs a passage which Meredith may have had in mind when he sought to impale the comic spirit. In the country of the Houyhnhnms, says Captain Lemuel Gulliver:—

> I wanted no Fence against Fraud or Oppression. Here was neither Physician to destroy my Body, nor Lawyer to ruin my Fortune ; No Informer to watch my Words, and Actions, or forge Accusations against me for hire : Here were no Gibers, Censurers, Backbiters, Pick-pockets, Highwaymen, House-breakers, Attorneys, Bawds, Buffoons, Gamesters, Politicians, Wits, splenetick, tedious Talkers, Controversists, Ravishers, Murderers, Robbers, Virtuosos, no Leaders or

Followers of Party and Faction : No encouragers to Vice, by Seducement or Examples : No Dungeons, Axes, Gibbets, Whipping-posts, or Pillories : No cheating Shopkeepers or Mechanicks : No Pride, Vanity : or Affectation : No Fops, Bullies, Drunkards, strolling Whores, or Poxes : No ranting, lewd, expensive Wives : No stupid, proud Pedants : No importunate, overbearing, quarrelsome, noisy, roaring, empty, conceited, sweating Companions : No Scoundrels, raised from the Dust for the sake of their Vices, or Nobility thrown into it on account of their Virtues : No Lords, Fiddlers, Judges, or Dancing Masters.

All the company of Louis was expropriated. All the conventions which they had elaborated for their protection were beneath the contempt of the honest beasts in their stables:—

"I was going on to more particulars," relates Gulliver, "when my Master commanded me Silence. He said, Whoever understood the Nature of *Yahoos* might easily believe it possible for so vile an Animal, to be capable of every Action I had named, if their Strength and Cunning equalled their Malice. But as my Discourse had increased his Abhorrence of the whole Species, so he found it gave him a Disturbance in his Mind, to which he was wholly a Stranger before. He thought his Ears being used to such abominable Words, might by Degrees admit them with less Detestation. That although he hated the *Yahoos* of this country, yet he no more blamed them for their odious Qualities, than he did a *Gnnayh* (a Bird of Prey) for its Cruelty, or a sharp Stone for cutting my Hoof. But when a Creature pretending to Reason, could be capable of such Enormities, he dreaded lest the Corruption of that Faculty might be worse than Brutality itself. He seemed therefore confident, that instead of Reason, we were only possessed of some Quality fitted to increase our natural Vices.

The age of prose and reason, as Matthew Arnold called it, did not lack its interrogator of reason, in a prose-narrative which rivals any fairy-tale in the affections of nursery children.

Richardson, who lived to do better work, was invited in 1740 by Mr Rivington and Mr Osborne, two of "the trade" to which he had been apprenticed, "to write for them a little volume of *Letters*, in a common style, on such subjects as might be of use to those country readers who were unable to indite for themselves. I set about it," he relates in his correspondence[1]; "and, in the progress of it, wrote two or three letters to instruct handsome girls who were obliged to go out to service, as we phrase it, how to avoid the snares that might be laid against their virtue." This was the origin of *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, 1741. One or two comments suggest themselves. First, *Pamela* was the obverse of the medal of which the aristocratic letter-writers, playwrights and novelists of the *grand siècle Louis quatorze* had displayed the glittering aspect. The "sonneteering marquises" and "rose-pink ladies" of Meredith's Molière, the "encouragers to vice" and "Lords and Dancing-Masters" of Swift's Gulliver, were now seen from the servants' point of view. Pamela believed in the appearances as long as she could ("It is for you, Sir, to say what you please, and for me only to say, God bless your Honour." Letter xxvii), but her credulity would not stretch beyond her virtue. Secondly, the reading-public of 1740, by the testimony of these excellent tradesmen, had spread to circles which were not reached by writers for the *salons* in Paris or the coffee-houses in London. There were "country readers unable to indite for themselves", and it is just worth noting that the first circulating library in England with an entrance-fee of a guinea and a subscription of a shilling a quarter, was founded in Fleet Street by a book-seller called Samuel Fancourt, in 1730. Thirdly, and most immediately to our

[1] See *Shadows of the Old Booksellers*, by Charles Knight; ch. vi. Knight died in 1873.

purpose, " there is so much of truth and nature in the conduct of the story," writes Charles Knight, " that we may have perfect confidence in the anecdote told by Sir John Herschel, of the blacksmith of a village, who read *Pamela* to his neighbours collected round his anvil. When the hero and heroine were brought together to live long and happily, according to the most approved rules, the congregation were so delighted as to raise a great shout, and procuring the church keys, actually set the parish bells ringing. This was a just tribute to the genius of the author, but perhaps as much so to the very intelligible sort of poetical justice which was the moral of the purity of the daughter of Gaffer and Gammer Andrews."

The new morality is the point. It accounts for the immense popularity at home and abroad of *Pamela* and her successors, and it links up Richardson, the bookseller, with Swift, the dependant secretary, and Defoe, a butcher's son. " The social changes in the eighteenth century," we read above, " give new influence to the middle classes and then to the democracy." This influence, as shy as it was new, altered the values of social life. The seduction of humble girls was no longer gallantry; valets were not indispensable any more; the cavalry-man was not a hero to his horse. " Truth and nature," to which the novelists were returning, was the common quest of the forward writers of this age, and it went at last to the public head like wine.

Meanwhile, and in conclusion to this section, we may illustrate very briefly the sensibility to natural objects in verse. We need not pause at merely formal manifestations. Content is more significant than form, and the frequent employment of the Spenserian stanza—by Thomson, in his *Castle of Indolence*, by William Shenstone (1714–63), in his *Schoolmistress*, 1737, and others—though a sign of reaching

out to romantic apperception, is not necessarily a sign of attaining it. Yet the use of an archaic metre and of archaic words did involve a departure from conventional diction, and should be noted in this place. As Taine, the French historian writes, it marked an attempt at passion and realism, when Shenstone "dared to describe a schoolmistress, and the very part on which she whips a young rascal".[1] But we have to listen for more secret notes than this. We do not hear the new sound very clearly. We have to listen to it at times between the lines, fashioned to the old correct style. One sign to be noted is accuracy of observation. Defoe and Richardson both practised it, each in places rather tediously, and with an effect of piling up items in a catalogue. But in order to form sense-impressions, instead of accepting records of things seen, it was necessary to observe afresh. The new poet was he,

> who, from the World escap'd,
> In still retreats and flowery solitudes,
> To Nature's Voice attends, from Month to Month,
> And Day to Day, thro' the revolving Year;
> Admiring, sees Her in her every Shape;
> Feels all her sweet Emotions at his Heart.[2]

The new poet was he, who, like John Dyer, was content to woo the "modest Muses":—

> So oft I have, the Even still,
> At the Fountain of a Rill,
> Sate upon a flow'ry Bed,
> With my Hand beneath my Head;
> And stray'd my Eyes o'er *Towy's* Flood,
> Over Mead and over Wood,
> From House to House, from Hill to Hill,
> Till Contemplation had her fill.[3]

[1] *History of English Literature*, E.T., iv, 7.
[2] James Thomson, *The Seasons, Autumn*, 1730.
[3] *Grongar Hill*, 1726.

We have here a new attitude towards natural objects: the inventorial attitude, which, after all, is not very far from invention, and which perused the things to be accounted " from day to day " and " from hill to hill ". Invention, in the sense of recombining things freshly seen to fresh conclusions, followed almost at once. It was still tentative, but it anticipated the stronger voices that were to be. Take Mark Akenside,[1] for example, who wrote a rather dull didactic poem called *The Pleasures of Imagination* in and after 1744. He deemed Nature equal in her gifts,

> Whatever happy man
> Will deign to use them. . . .
> Each passing hour sheds tribute from his wings ;
> And still new beauties meet his lonely walk ;
> And loves unfelt attract him.

Feeling and solitude again. Nor is it only " pleasure " which he may derive:—

> for the attentive mind,
> By this harmonious action on her pow'rs,
> Becomes herself harmonious. . . . Thus the men
> Whom Nature's works can charm, with God himself
> Hold converse ; grow familiar, day by day,
> With his conceptions ; act upon his plan.

Wordsworth, seventy years afterwards, in the ninth book of *The Excursion*, was to make bolder with this perception, which he had seized already in 1798:—

> If such be Nature's holy plan,
> Have I not reason to lament
> What man has made of man ?

and it is as instructive as it is fascinating to find the foundations of his " natural religion "[2] laid while Pope was still alive.

[1] 1721–70. [2] The phrase used by F. W. H. Myers.

CHAPTER VIII

The Eighteenth Century

II : *Second Half*

THIS period, which begins about 1750, will be simpler to understand, if middle-aged readers will remember that their great-grandfathers were alive in it. The grandparents of the passing generation were born in the stirring years between the French Revolution and the Battle of Waterloo, and it is a true, if sombre, reflection that *their* parents went to school and made love when Burns and Blake were young men, Rousseau's ghost was a vivid presence, Voltaire and Johnson were old or recently dead, the star of Byron had not risen, and Goethe, Schiller, Scott and Wordsworth had a long activity in front of them.

It is a good thing to bring these years close. Partly, the mistakes of the nineteenth century, and an excessive pride in its own achievements, have removed them relatively further than they are distant in time; partly, they lie neglected under a vast bibliography; and partly, it is the privilege of the twentieth century to discover the virtues of its recent ancestors. A clear sign of these discoveries may be selected from an economic study by Mrs. George, who reminds us, more discreetly than we paraphrase her, that social reform did not start when her namesake was Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the process of her research, she writes, "it became impossible to escape the conviction of a gradually improving state of things." She notes a set-back between 1720 and 1750 (the

active years, by the way, of Alexander Pope), "but the new spirit," she goes on, "which (rightly or wrongly) regarded the miseries of man as due not to original sin or an inscrutable Providence, but to bad laws or bad environment, was beginning to be concerned not only to relieve distress but to deal with its causes. As most of our modern social and industrial evils have a longer history than is often supposed, so had the process of improvement and reform"; and she traces, "the advance in health, cleanliness, order, sobriety and education, which had obviously been going on in London since 1850" to "at least the middle of the eighteenth century".[1]

Thus, in a sense—a salutary reminder—we are all a hundred years older than we think ourselves. The problems of the present generation are the problems which our great-grandfathers tried to solve, and old men whom we have met had met old men who were trying to solve them. The means are very much the same: the test of the real by the ideal, of scientific method by spiritual aims, and the revision, accordingly, of accepted values in the conduct of life. Though certain favoured classes had things their own way, people began to see that all was not for the best in the best of all possible worlds. There had been war, as there has been war since, but war was not all glorious and honourable: "sometimes," as Gulliver explained to the Houyhnhnms in 1726, "our Neighbours want the things which we have, or have the things which we want. It is justifiable to enter into war against our nearest Ally, when one of his Towns lies convenient for us, or a Territory of Land, that would render our Dominions round and compleat"; and, two centuries afterwards, convenience was still a pretext for military occupation. Between 1756 and 1763,

[1] *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*. By M. Dorothy George. London, 1925, p. 20.

again, the Great Powers were engaged in a Seven Years War on three continents and at sea. England and Prussia beat the French at Rossbach and Minden; the French navy was defeated at Lagos and Quiberon Bay; Clive and Eyre Coote beat the French in India, and General Wolfe took Quebec—all in or near 1759. We recall Seeley's formula for the eighteenth century: "the expansion of England in the New World and in Asia is the formula which sums up for England the history of the eighteenth century. The great triple war of the middle of that century is neither more nor less than the great decisive duel between England and France for the possession of the New World." We recall, too, David Garrick's [1] *Hearts of Oak*, written in 1759 "to add something more to this wonderful Year":—

Hearts of Oak are our ships,
Hearts of Oak are our Men,
We always are ready,
Steady ! Boys ! steady !
We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.

Garrick was Dr Johnson's friend and pupil: they had come to London together from Edial in 1737. But what did Johnson himself think, in his greater tender English heart, of this wonderful year ? Johnson was on the conqueror's side. Was he ready to conquer again? Or was he at one with Voltaire, on the loser's side, in a generous alertness to forces directing ships and men to victories of peace more renowned than of war ? Voltaire's *Candide* and Johnson's *Rasselas* were both published in 1759, the year of Quiberon Bay and Quebec, the year of Minden and *Hearts of Oak*, within a few months of Rossbach and Plassey, and, like Swift in the previous generation, these great writers were not so certain that all was wonderful and well. The New World, for which the duel was

[1] 1717–79.

fought, as it had been fought by the countrymen of Cervantes and Shakespeare in the sixteenth century, could not altogether silence the "new spirit" which looked on man's miseries, and saw that they proceeded from remediable causes. Dr Pangloss had brought up Candide in the comfortable belief "that things cannot be otherwise than they are. They who assert that everything is *right* do not express themselves correctly; they should say that everything is *best*". But Candide's environment in life convinced him, by shifting experiences, that this admirable doctrine did not fit the harshness of reality. The practical philosopher should be content if he might peacefully cultivate his own garden. Rasselas, listening to many counsellors, came to much the same conclusion. He retired from his voyages of curiosity to the "happy valley" whence he started; and Sir Leslie Stephen aptly joins these two tales—the Frenchman's and the Englishman's, written while their countries were at war—as "among the most powerful expressions of the melancholy produced in strong intellects by the sadness and sorrows of the world."[1] In France, where the pursuit of vainglory and Bourbonism without end were hastening men along many roads to revolution, till 1789 succeeded 1759, Voltaire's rebuke to optimists was the more superficial, as it was the more brilliant, of the two stories. In England, where serious men, by the evidence of economists and research-workers, were pondering the domestic aspects of warfare for expansion overseas, Johnson's fable, if less conclusive, was even sadder in its wisdom. It is to be compared, on the one part, with his poem on *The Vanity of Human Wishes*:—

> Let observation with extensive view
> Survey mankind, from China to Peru. . . .
> Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,

[1] *Samuel Johnson* (English Men of Letters), p. 50.

And pause awhile from letters, to be wise ;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail,
See nations slowly wise, and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust. . . .
On what foundations stands the warrior's pride,
How just his hopes, let Swedish Charles decide ; . . .
He left the name, at which the world grows pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale. . . .
Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd ;
For love, which scarce collective man can fill ;
For patience, sov'reign o'er transmuted ill ;
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat :
These goods for man the laws of heav'n ordain,
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain ;
With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.

It was the happiness that Wisdom did not find for which Johnson valiantly strove, with other brave and wise men in the eighteenth century, when they wrote their odes to melancholy, and their reflections on the vanity of human wishes. On the other part, both those tales, *Candide* and *Rasselas* alike, are to be aligned with the serious essays of social and moral reformers, who used the distant as a lure to the near. Particularly, the strangeness of the Orient added to the attraction of the lure. The motive probably came from the recovery of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, which Antoine Galland had translated into French between 1704 and 1717. A year or two later, Montesquieu,[1] the great French jurist, decocted his political philosophy into "Persian

[1] 1689–1755, *De l'Esprit des Lois*, 1748.

Letters" (*Lettres persanes*, 1721), and Oliver Goldsmith employed the same device in his *Citizen of the World*, 1762, first issued as *Chinese Letters*. Candide, in his Westphalian castle, and Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, both availed themselves of the phantasy of a foreign scene for their criticism of domestic modes and manners.

But, apart from these technical details, what is the truth about 1759? A wonderful year, Garrick called it, who was then 42 years of age. But what is its ultimate value, to us who are reminded by historians that our own social and moral advance dates at least from the middle of the eighteenth century? It is our year as much as Garrick's, or Johnson's, or Voltaire's, or General Wolfe's, who died, we remember, above Quebec. Their life is prolonged into our life, their unsolved problems are ours, who are a little further along the road to solution, but still far from the goal. Tracing the "new spirit" of the eighteenth century, reflected in the literature of the age, we shall be tracing the path of our own advance, and shall see a closer connexion between that time and this. *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, for example, was published in six volumes in 1749. In the same year, Henry Fielding,[1] its author, in his capacity as magistrate at Westminster, issued a charge to the grand jury, with "proposals for a County workhouse", and for an "inquiry into the causes of the late increase of robbers"—the causes, observe, not merely the cure. Can we not link up the mind of Fielding with the mind of Charles Dickens,[2] who was almost exactly a hundred years Fielding's junior; and can we not extract from the history of the eighteenth century a graver and even a truer moral than that which Garrick indicated to Seeley? "We'll fight and conquer again and again." We fought

[1] 1707–54. [2] 1812–70.

France for the New World, we have fought Germany in the Old, and hearts of oak are still tough in English breasts. But we have been fighting a longer and sterner fight for "the choice of life" renounced by Rasselas, and the right way out of his "happy valley", for the removal of the causes of crime and indigence, and for the "new spirit" in human law, sought by the Hippocrates of the eighteenth century in his treatise *de l'Esprit des Lois*.[1]

> This way have men come out of brutishness,
> To spell the letters of the sky, and read
> A reflex upon earth, else meaningless.

It is to the reflex of the skyey letters on that way that the rest of this section will mainly be devoted.

Let us go back for a moment to Chaucer, who exhilarated England under her fogs. His characters in the *Canterbury Tales* were drawn from all classes of society; he did not wait to "set folk in their degree" but suited their speech to their estate. This unaffected truthfulness of Chaucer kept him fresh and sweet in Dryden's estimate, and attracted the scholarly labours of Thomas Tyrwhitt[2] in 1775. Next, Sir Philip Sidney, it will be recalled, objected to Edmund Spenser that he had not been as careful as Sannazzaro, the Italian Theocritus, to avoid contact with the vulgar: "this framing of its style to an old rustic language I dare not allow"; and in the same century, a writer called Puttenham, in an essay (1589) *Of Poets and Poesy*, said that "because the actions of mean and base personages tend in very few cases to any great good example—for who pauseth to follow the steps and manner of life of a craftsman, shepherd or sailor;

[1] Gomperz, *Griechische Denker* (E.T., i, 311, London, 1901) calls Hippocrates "the precursor of Montesquieu, and the founder of national psychology".

[2] See p. 118, above.

yea, how almost is it possible that such manner of men should be of any virtue other than their profession requireth?—therefore was nothing committed to history but matters of great and excellent persons and things".

The art of literature, we observe, made slow and difficult headway against the resistance of rank and birth. Chaucer apologized for his neglect of precedence; Spenser was suspect of rusticity, and "mean and base personages" were not fit for the company of men of letters. The same objections persisted in the eighteenth century. George Lillo was blamed for introducing a common apprentice into tragedy; Swift, for writing *Directions to Servants*; and Richardson, for seeking his heroines from the same inferior degree. Yet the lower orders, as they were called, broke through the jealous fences of feudalism and chivalry. After all, there was a sailor at the Tabard Inn, where the pilgrims foregathered for Canterbury. He was "sunbrowned" and "certainly a good fellow". He had a dagger slung round his neck, and a decent palate for Bordeaux vintages. A "nice conscience" was not among his assets: if he took prisoners, he drowned them; but there was no one from Hull to Carthage to beat him in observation of the moon, and he could sail you from the Baltic to Finisterre. We recall, too, the quay at Antwerp, where Sir Thomas More in 1516 met "a man well stricken in age, with a black sunburned face", who "took more care for travelling than dying, having customably in his mouth these sayings: 'He that hath no grave is covered with the sky,' and 'the way to Heaven out of all places is of like length and distance'." Then there was Shakespeare's "wet sea boy", who slept sounder than a king; and Richard Hakluyt's visit to his cousin, who had lying open on his table "certain books of

cosmography, with an universal Map"; and Sir Walter Ralegh, who "spent his leisure-time at sea in the study of chemistry". So, Tobias Smollett,[1] the ship's surgeon, who wrote *Roderick Random* in 1748, might be keeping very vulgar company, but in choosing to be the sailor's novelist he could quote excellent precedents. "Craftsmen", too, had figured in English literature before Defoe, in *Robinson Crusoe*, made craftsmanship the virtue of a man. This relaxation of the social code by men of letters, and their recourse to "mean and base personages", and to the feelings of apprentice-lads, servant-girls, field-labourers, and even the animals of the field, which marked the "new spirit" of the eighteenth century, was not so monstrous as the old guard pretended. The whole problem of aristocratic resistance to the literary emancipation of the middle and lower classes was stated by Sir Walter Scott, in a speech by Claverhouse in *Old Mortality*, who, asked if he ever read Froissart, made ironic reply:—

> His chapters inspire me with more enthusiasm than even poetry itself. With what true chivalrous feeling he confines his beautiful expressions of sorrow to the death of the gallant and high-bred knight, of whom it was a pity to see the fall, such was his loyalty to his King, pure faith to his religion, hardihood towards his enemy, and fidelity to his lady-love! Ah, *benedicite*, how he will mourn over the fall of such a pearl of knighthood, be it on the side he happens to favour, or on the other. But, truly, for sweeping from the face of the earth some few hundreds of villain churls, who are born but to plough it, the high-born and inquisitive historian has marvellous little sympathy.

It is a brilliantly ironical speech. "Loyalty to his King," when Louis XVI had been guillotined by his subjects. "Faith to his religion," when

[1] 1721–71.

Voltaire had exclaimed " Ecrasez l'infâme! " " Hardihood towards his enemy, and fidelity to his lady-love," when

> In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends,
> Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad
> Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
> In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now;
> And thus, on every side beset with foes,
> The goaded land waxed mad.[1]

For the France of Froissart declined into the France of Robespierre. The knight gave place to the *citoyen*. Feudal precedence and the conventions of chivalry yielded to *liberté*, *fraternité*, *égalité*, and the " villain churls " were no longer dispossessed. " Mean and base personages " went before princes, and no Puttenham should exclude them from Parnassus.

We are to follow in Europe this democratization of literature, and to trace it downward from its springs in the eighteenth century. We shall find a harsh example in George Crabbe,[2] and a tender example in William Cowper,[3] both of whom were acute observers of rustic life, though the one scheduled its shadows, and the other clutched at its lights. We shall find even a truer contrast in another pair of contemporaries, William Godwin and William Wordsworth, of whose relation to each other a distinguished Frenchman has said: " It would be easy to show Wordsworth reconstructing, one by one, the feelings of which Godwin had stripped *l'homme ideal* ".[4] We shall have to seize the significance of this perception, and to discover how two writers in one age, each intent on principles of human justice, could pursue such contrary ways, that the one restored what the

[1] Wordsworth, *Prelude*, xi, 331–6.

[2] 1754–1832. [3] 1731–1800.

[4] E. Legouis, *La Jeunesse de Wordsworth*, Paris, 1896, p. 316. Godwin's dates are 1756–1836; Wordsworth's, 1770–1850.

other took away. Seeking this reconciliation, the investigation may lead us to a common fount. Meanwhile, our brief retrospect will have shown us, that, whatever hand scatters the seed, it will fall in England on fertile soil, where it will be tended by men of letters, not unaccustomed to rebellion from authority, in social and moral affairs, yet competent to hold rebellion in check. As Dryden, at the close of the seventeenth century, mediated between " ancient " and " modern " rule, so in the new time of emancipation, of flowing sentiment and breaking barriers, of slaves redeemed and the poor-law reformed, of the mouse, the hare, and the meanest flower admitted to the franchise of feeling, Dryden's successors, towards the close of the eighteenth, will absorb the best, and reject the worst, of the revolutionary movement in France.

What is this revolutionary movement? What was it, *before* the break-out of the pent forces which altered the map of Europe? What was it, that is to say, in the eighteenth century, at the summons of the States General in 1789, but *before* the execution of Louis XVI on 21st January, 1793, and the rise of Bonaparte almost immediately afterwards? There is, of course, an immense library of books written about the French Revolution: Aulard, Carlyle, Michelet, Sorel, Sybel, Taine, Thiers—we cannot enumerate even the general historians; but what we want to get at here is the spirit which moved upon the face of the waters, a spirit not always fully seized by the names, either general or departmental, given later to the forms which it assumed.

There was once a Society in England for commemorating the Revolution of 1688, by which King William was substituted for King James. Dr Richard Price, a Nonconformist divine, who was born in 1723, and died in 1791, well within the boundaries of the eighteenth century, was a member

of that Society. Why not? It was a law-abiding association, founded to commemorate a date which still commands the reverence of loyal Englishmen. Yet Edmund Burke (1729–97; likewise within the boundaries of the century) fell very heavily on Dr Price in his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, November, 1790. There were revolutions *and* revolutions, we observe: revolutions meet to be commemorated, and revolutions meet to be condemned, and the best men alive in the eighteenth century might confuse the one with the other. Plainly, then, there was room for two opinions about the spirit on the waters.

Take another facet of vision. William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was working hard about this time at the excellent cause of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The omens were propitious, and other liberal causes, too—Parliamentary Reform among them—seemed to be on the road to victory. But French affairs in 1790–2 cast a shadow across the Channel, "dimming the light and distorting the perspective along the whole range of British politics. . . Thenceforward it was impossible for the British people to determine British questions on their merits".[1] Note the words which are used: a dim light, a false perspective, and questions wrenched out of their merits. "The effects of the Revolution in England," we read elsewhere,[2] "had been to inspire the majority with an unreasoning dread of change. But for this feeling, Parliament might have been reformed, Non-conformists freed from their disabilities, and the Slave Trade abolished before the end of the century." That is to say, the spirit on the waters was destroyed by the forms which it assumed. Mr Coupland says it in so many words: "No great stir had been created

[1] *Wilberforce: a Narrative.* By R. Coupland, p. 150. Oxford, 1923.

[2] *Cambridge Modern History*, viii, 762.

at the first appearance of Revolutionary France on the European stage. Observers on this side of the Channel had looked the new actor up and down, and concluded that he was not unlike themselves—almost an Englishman, a very old-fashioned Englishman, about a century behind the times": an Englishman precisely of 1688, the year of Revolution, which Dr Price was commemorating, in the hope, shared by Wilberforce and others, of extending its area of beneficence. But the spirit, as Burke pointed out, was assuming an evil form.

Take yet another facet. Voltaire, author of *Candide*, died before the French Revolution. He, too, was an eighteenth century man (1694–1778), and his influence was profound in France, England, and in Frederick the Great's Prussia. He spread light on the conventions and acceptances of the age which was to answer his questions only eleven years after his death. France was Voltairean[1] before she was revolutionary; incredulous, impatient, inacquiescent in social and moral standards which had seemed everlasting till they were touched into dust. Voltaire poured himself through many channels of expression: tragedies, comedies, epopee, tales, history, philosophy, science, and a mock-heroic poem on Joan of Arc, *La Pucelle*. A boy of ten, with sparkling eyes and speech, he attracted Ninon de l'Enclos ("Nôtre Dame des Amours"), who left him a legacy, and, a youth of 23, he spent some months in the Bastille to cool the heat of his wit.

[1] "Voltaire was the very eye of eighteenth-century illumination. . . The four-score volumes which he wrote are the monument, as they were in some sort the instrument of a new renascence. . . . Voltaire was a stupendous force, not only because his expression was incomparably lucid, but because he saw many new things after which the spirits of others were unconsciously groping and dumbly yearning." J. Morley, *Voltaire*, 6–7.

At the production of his *Irène* in 1778, the whole theatre rose to do him honour. A few months later, the clergy of Paris refused him burial; and, later again, the heroes of the Revolution transferred his remains to the Pantheon. "The years," writes an English poet,

> Interpret everything aright,
> And crown with weeds our pride of towers,
> And warm our marble through with sun,
> And break our pavements through with flowers,
> With an Amen when all is done,

and so it has been with Voltaire, whose marble was too brilliant in his lifetime. He failed to spiritualize his experience. He saw the ruffled face of the waters, but not the spirit which moved upon them. He gave France precisely what she wanted, but not what she lacked, for it was not Voltaire's scepticism which made Paris an unbeliever, but Parisian unbelief which made Voltaire a sceptic. Yet to the English school, or tradition, of Dr Johnson (1709–84), his contemporary, and George Crabbe (1754–1832), his junior, Voltaire was the destroyer and the corrupter, the witty Frenchman whose scoffs and abuse, whose ridicule and irony (aimed, not at God, but at the priests, not at the Church, but at its ceremonies) upset, in a homely phrase, the faith and sanctities of life, which might have preserved many pious men from sin. For this cause, Johnson found it difficult to affix "the proportion of iniquity" between Voltaire and Rousseau, to whom we shall come back; and for this cause, Crabbe, in 1810, tracing the degradation of Abel Keene, accounted the priest's

> pious books, his solemn prayers,
> Not worth one tale of the admired Voltaire's,

and included in Keene's confession of his "smooth career of unbelief and vice" the influence of Voltairean youths, who would oft,

with sprightly speech and bold,
Their witty tales of naughty priests unfold;
"'Twas all a craft," they said, "a cunning trade,
Not she the priests, but priests religion made."

Yet it was in England, when Samuel Johnson was a youth, that Voltaire had learned the elements of his philosophy. He spent three years here, after his release from the Bastille. He dedicated his tragic *Zaïre*, 1732, to Pope's Bolingbroke. Pope's *Universal Prayer* felicitously expresses Voltaire's creed. His *Lettres anglaises* were published in 1734, and, years afterwards, towards the end of his life, he defended his "écrasez l'infâme!"—his cry for the extinction of superstition—as an ideal with which English practice had indoctrinated him. Plainly, the revolutionary movement *before* the French Revolution, while liberal societies were still commemorating the Revolution of 1688, and while philanthropic statesmen were labouring to extend its benefits, appealed to different temperaments in different ways. To Johnson, and Burke, and in a less degree, to Crabbe—Burke was twenty years younger than Johnson, and Crabbe five-and-twenty years younger than Burke, but the two elder were friends, and both were acquainted with Crabbe—it spelt the doom of English aims in the eighteenth century, and set back the clock of humane effort. Burke and Johnson judged before the end: they had seen enough, and they stood in the old ways; and Crabbe, who, according to his son's *Life*, "was one of the good men who hailed the beginning of the French Revolution," and was always, within limits, a champion of the weak and poor, lived long enough to forget the beginning of the Revolution in its end. "Men are not equal," he declared, in reply to the advocates of *égalité*,

and 'tis meet and right
That robes and titles our respect excite;

Order requires it. 'Tis by vulgar pride
That such regard is censured and denied;
Or by that false, enthusiastic zeal
That thinks the spirit will the priest reveal.[1]

To others, within the bounds of the eighteenth century, the spirit on the face of the waters meant more than the waves which it aroused. They did not survive, like Wordsworth, to mourn the end, when

Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
For one of conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for.[2]

Rather, they shared his early ecstasy, in the verses later incorporated in the same Book of *The Prelude*, but first published separately under the title, *French Revolution, as it appeared to Enthusiasts at its Commencement*:—

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance! . . .
Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty
Did both find helpers to their hearts' desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,—
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia,—subterranean fields,—
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place, where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all!

This was the revolutionary movement, democratizing thought and letters, and extending the franchise of human happiness, which Dr Richard Price celebrated in 1790. This was the *other* mood of 1790, when our great-grandfathers were alive, and Burke wrote his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, and Arthur

[1] *The Borough*, iv, 94–9. [2] *Prelude*, xi, 206–9.

Wellesley was an aide-de-camp in Ireland, and Horatio Nelson was unemployed, and William Wordsworth, landing at Calais, saw

> In a mean city, and among a few
> How bright a face is worn, when joy of one
> Is joy for tens of millions.[1]

Three great nations, to be divided by war—England and Prussia against France in 1815, France and England against Germany in 1914—were united in the creation of that mood; and, while students of literature will regret the depredations of the makers of policy, France and Germany may still look back to the relations of Voltaire with Frederick the Great and of Mme de Stael with August Schlegel,[2] Romanticist and Shakespearean scholar; Germany and England may still pay thanks to the Kings of England who were Electors of Hanover; and England and France, renewing in an *entente cordiale* the older *entente littéraire*, may recall a recent historian's *aperçu*: "It is a curious fact that in some ways Europe was more of a unity in the eighteenth century than it has been since."[3] Happily, the harmonies of art survive the severances of diplomacy.

There comes a time when every historian, however narrow his range, and however slender his equipment, is embarrassed by the fact that events which occur contemporaneously must be narrated successively. Three great nations, France, England, and Prussia, with occasional rayings from Italy, Spain, the Low Countries, and the North, were moved simultaneously by an impulse towards what has been called "the Renaissance of the eighteenth century". It was a

[1] *Prelude*, vi, 347–9.

[2] A. W. Schlegel, 1767–1845; Mme de Stael, 1766–1817, wrote *Allemagne*, 1810, under his influence.

[3] *A History of Europe*. By I. L. Plunket and R. B. Mowat, p. 549. Oxford, 1927.

movement, which, in different hands, aimed at equality, perfection, human justice, natural law, common feeling, free thought. It restored the lost provinces of the mind, which had been forbidden to expatiate in the regions of sentiment and fancy. When Addison wrote his *Pleasures of the Imagination* in early numbers of *The Spectator*, and Akenside, in 1744, his poem on the same topic, they were deliberately restoring those provinces, which were re-mapped very carefully by Wordsworth in his classification of his verse into "Poems Founded on the Affections", "Poems of the Fancy", "Poems of the Imagination", "Poems of Sentiment and Reflection", and so forth. No one could reassort these poems correctly, if Wordsworth's boundaries were removed, but at the end of the eighteenth century, conscious of its recovery of lost terrain, the categories were real, and are traceable partly to the philosophy of John Locke (1632–1704). Take, again, merely as summary evidence, for title-pages are not books, the names of some of the writings in the generation before Wordsworth. The new outlook required new reference-books, and Dr Johnson's *Dictionary* of the English language was published in 1755; the *Encyclopedia Britannica* was founded in 1768, in the wake of the great French *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and his circle, 1750–76. These works in their various kinds enabled new definitions to be given, and new views of objects and conduct to be presented. The interpretation of art and antiquity was revised: by Winckelmann, *Greek Painting and Statuary*, 1755; by Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1756; by Lessing's *Laocoon*, 1766, and Reynold's *Discourses on Art*, from 1769. Rasselas and Candide, as we observed, inquired into happiness in 1759, when Adam Smith, the future author of *The Wealth of Nations*, published his *Theory*

of the Moral Sentiments. Human feeling was sought from the ages before machinery[1]: by Macpherson, in his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry in the Highlands*, 1760, and in his famous, but forged, Gaelic epics of "Ossian", which won instant popularity in Europe, where the great Turgot[2] introduced them to France, and a greater Frenchman, Napoleon, took them with him from Egypt to St Helena in Cesarotti's Italian version; and there were Bishop Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry*, 1765, etc. Novels of feeling and sensation abounded: Rousseau's *Nouvelle Heloïse* (note the renovated figure of old romance), 1761, which was the year of Diderot's *Éloge de Richardson*; Walpole's typical terror-novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764; Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, 1766; Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, 1768; Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, 1771; Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, 1773, and his *Sorrows of the Young Werther*, 1774. Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), sometimes called the Rousseau of Germany, had introduced Goethe in Strassburg, with its appropriate Gothic cathedral, to a congenial circle of young Anglophils, to whom he read *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and expounded Shakespeare, "Ossian," and the rest, and who included a typical Primrose family, with whose daughter, Friederika Brion, Goethe promptly and characteristically fell in love. Do not these bare titles of a few books, between 1744 and 1774, when Schiller was 15 and Kant 50 years of age, when Wordsworth, Scott and Coleridge were babies, and Rousseau was nearing the squalid end of his unhappy life, establish a chain of evidence to the contemporaneousness of the tri-lingual forces, which flowed

[1] This search accompanied the new conscience in social legislation and inquiry.

[2] 1727–81. Turgot translated some fragments soon after the first appearance of *Ossian*; he also effected translations from Klopstock.

in France to the summons of the States General, the charter of the recovered provinces, in 1789? And shall we shudder or smile at the bare facts that Dr Price was celebrating one Revolution while Burke was reflecting sombrely on another, that Rousseau learned in England the doctrine for which Johnson would have condemned him to a felon's fate, that the States General was followed by the Terror, that Thomas Carlyle, by his life of Frederick the Great, founded Treitschke's Prussian school of history, that Bonaparte read "Ossian", and even that a sister of Bismarck bore the Ossianic name of Malvina?[1] We said that the harmonies of art survive the severances of diplomacy: we see here marks of their contact, and wonder if arms or arts are the final court of appeal.

They met in the well-famed opening words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract*, 1762: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." The formula struck the imagination of toilers in both fields and in two continents. It does not bear cross-examination, of course. It is refuted by the maxim of the legal Psalm, "I will walk at liberty, for I have sought thy precepts," and by social man's self-protective experience since the dawn of civilization. It is less true to-day, nearly two hundred years after its formulation, than at almost any intervening date, and in England, whence its first sanction was derived, than in almost any other country. Man is born in very heavy chains, and, if he wins a restricted freedom, it is by his gradual compliance with regulations. But the formula, in the hour of its promulgation, was not subjected to close scrutiny. Its bold fallacy went further than a truism, because conventional truth

[1] I owe this last point to Professor C. Vaughan's Warton Lecture (British Academy), 1913, on *The Influence of English Poetry upon the Romantic Revival on the Continent*.

no longer covered the range of vision in France, Germany, and, in a less degree, in England. It was from this marginal response that Rousseau's magic was drawn. His logic might be riddled with objections, as thick as the shame of his life, but they did not touch his sense of the outer values. He was the prophet of the outlander and the outlaw, at a time when the foundations of law had been investigated by Locke and Montesquieu, and when a national sense was being quickened in all orders of society. He supplied new patterns of action, based on feeling more securely than on reason, in all departments of conduct, social and individual alike, and he became, like Delphi itself, the oracle of priests of many denominations. The names are legion of those who traced their inspiration to Pytho-Rousseau, dark and confusing and even mischievous as many of his oracular sayings were. " The worship of Rousseau," we read, " penetrated all classes, and touched every degree of intelligence." And, again, of his *Social Contract*: " Such parts of it as people did not understand, or did not like, they left out." The rest became the gospel of libertarians in France, Germany, and America: " his theory made the native land what it had been to the citizens of earlier date, a true centre of existence," like the synagogue to Jews in a medieval ghetto. He made the poor man very proud, it has been said, and " it was in Rousseau that polite Europe first hearkened to strange voices and faint reverberation from out of the vague and cavernous shadow in which the common people move ".[1]

Common people moving out of the shadow: these form the great company of Rousseau, and we forget, in their vast and long procession, the coarse companion of his poverty, and the children whom he abandoned

[1] The quotations are from *Rousseau and his Era*, by John Viscount Morley, London, 1923, vol. ii, pp. 298, 240–1, and vol. i, p. 6.

ROUSSEAU

Sokrates ging unter durch Sophisten,
Rousseau leidet, Rousseau fällt durch Christen.
Rousseau—der aus Christen Menschen wirbt—SCHILLER

[*face p. 220*

at the foundlings' hospital. Common people moving out of their shadow into the light of the open fields: out of the shadow so obvious to George Crabbe; so interpenetrated in the verse of William Cowper by gleams from the star to which Rousseau's wagon was hitched:—

> God made the country, and man made the town . . .
> He is the freeman whom the truth makes free . . .
> His are the mountains, and the valleys his . . .
> Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness . . .
> I was a stricken deer that left the herd . . .
> I knew at least one hare that had a friend.

We cannot spend much time with Cowper, though the exercise is more remunerative than some modern readers are aware, even apart from his *Diverting History of John Gilpin* (a mean and base personage, in his degree), his *Loss of the Royal George*, his *Castaway*, his verses *On the receipt of my Mother's Picture out of Norfolk*, his *Olney Hymns*, and his translation of Homer. But passage after passage might be quoted from that gentle, sad, attractive writer, who broke away so instinctively from artifice, to attest the influence which he conveyed from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

Common people moving out of their shadow into the light of knowledge. Rousseau's *Emile* changed the conception of the parent or schoolmaster and the child. R. H. Quick, in his famous *Essays on Educational Reformers*,[1] says that " the writings of Rousseau and the results produced by them are among the strangest things in history; and especially in matters of education it is more than doubtful if the wise man of the world, Montaigne, the Christian philanthropist, Comenius, or that ' slave of truth and reason ', the philosopher Locke, had half as much influence as this depraved serving man. There is no denying

[1] London, 1868, and often re-issued.

Rousseau's genius. Willingly or unwillingly, at first hand or from imperfect echoes, everyone who studies education must study Rousseau." J. B. Basedow (1723–90) studied him at the Philanthropinum in Dessau; Pestalozzi (1746–1827) studied him in Switzerland; and that quaint child-reformer, Thomas Day (1748–89), who afflicted our nurseries in the last century with his portentous *History of Sandford and Merton*, studied him, with Richard Lovell Edgeworth,[1] and others, in England. Mothers nursed their babies at Rousseau's bidding, and dressed them in robes of his design, despite those five foundlings of his own begetting. We must be content here with the " imperfect echoes " of which Quick speaks, but they are loud enough and clear enough to prove, that, in Rousseau's *Emile*, the rod-emblem of education in the Renaissance was replaced by the emblem of the child himself.

Common people moving out of their shadow into the light of sensibility or imagination. Repressive inhibitions were removed or ignored, and that Crusoe feeling, which Rousseau so much admired, of building a world out of one's own resources, was communicated to all departments of thought. Sensation, sensibility, sentiment: the three words are all akin, though the last has degenerated in meaning. A reliance on sense, or feeling, derived ultimately from the philosophic system of John Locke, is common to the three, and the return to nature, thus permitted, released men, whether legislators or poets, from a merely mechanical view of the universe. The overthrow of feudal society, consummated in the Revolution in France, was begun in the workshops of poets, who drew inspiration from Rousseau. Schiller's *Räuber*, 1781, may be cited in proof: its hero was sick of " this ink-

[1] 1744–1817; father of Maria Edgeworth, the Anglo-Irish novelist, 1767–1849.

slinging century", which compared so unfavourably with the times of which he had read in Plutarch (North's Shakespeare's Plutarch, we remember); and he sought to cure the evils of his father's court by a violent "return to nature", through the robber-morality of the open woods. But we need not seek out Rousseau-notes in Schiller; he struck the note for all time in his stanzas on Rousseau himself, the three concluding lines of which are so clear as to be intelligible even in a foreign language:—

> Socrates ging unter durch Sophisten,
> Rousseau leidet, Rousseau fällt durch Christen,
> Rousseau—der aus Christen Menschen wirbt.

Rousseau, the Socrates of the eighteenth century, who turned Christians into men: is not here the complete condonation of the Voltairean attack on *l'Infâme*? is not here the final refutation of Johnson's conventional view of Rousseau as a rascal meriting transportation? And is not here the summary conclusion to a long chapter in the making of the modern mind? The Revolutionaries in Paris took their name of *citoyen* from Rousseau. So be it. But Rousseau died in 1778, and, because he selected and re-combined the ideas of sentiment and imagination, which were liberating the human intellect in his age, he is not to be held responsible for excesses committed by politicians. The mind eloquent in Kant and Goethe, in Wordsworth, Shelley and many more, owed much of its nobility and sense of social honour to the obscure watchmaker's son in Geneva, whose difficult and morbid genius would yet have been shocked, as even Burke admitted, by the "practical phrensy" of some who swore in the master's name. Again and again, in the history of the mind of Europe, we have to distinguish between its ideal makers, and realists who apply their teachings and unravel a pattern which

they cannot imitate; and justly, in *The Triumph of Life*, written more than a century ago, Shelley evoked Rousseau's ghost to exclaim:—

> I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did and died,
> And, if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
> Had been with purer nutriment supplied,
> Corruption would not now thus much inherit
> Of what was once Rousseau . . .
> If I have been extinguished, yet there rise
> A thousand beacons from the spark I bore.

We cannot enumerate these beacon-lights. The simple life, mountain-scenery, dumb animals: certain sentimental ideas, not necessarily invented by Rousseau, but fondled by him and strengthened in his keeping, passed into literature through his care. Certain social objects, too, such as children's rights and peasants' prosperity, were fostered by his reflections; and larger inferences in religion and political thought were wrapped up in, or, at least, were unfolded from, the bold, speculative musings of the author of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Émile*, and *Le Contrat Social*. Like Socrates, with whom Schiller compared him, he brought philosophy from heaven to earth; and, if some sentiment became mawkish, some expressions of love became gross, and some aspects of philanthropy insincere, we should blame not the ethereal message, but its earthy contamination. Charlatanry, sham and humbug are ever the camp-followers of genius, as we see in the history of psychical research in our own day; and Rousseau was not so free from corroding elements of character as to purify his message from the mud in which he trailed his life. "The vessel splits, the thought survives." The most perfect vessel is never flawless crystal. Even Petrarch, the Rousseau of the fourteenth century, contaminated his devotion to Humanism with a moment's rally to Rienzi; and Rousseau, the Petrarch of the eighteenth century,

was more liable to temptations of the flesh. But the thought survives. Each of these thinkers dates an epoch. The Italian died in 1374, the Frenchman in 1778; the Reformation followed the one, the Revolution followed the other; and Rousseau was wanted to complete what Petrarch had begun, and even to undo what had been done by his continuators in four centuries of imperfect operation. A century and a half after Rousseau's death, retracing his path in places, and, in places patching its explosions, we are on the way to the third epoch in the history of the release of the human mind. For Petrarch and Rousseau have taught us, by the discoverers and inventors whom they inspired, that not man, but mind, is born free, and everywhere it is in chains.

We return to the sane gravity of Samuel Johnson, who, like Dryden before him, and like Tennyson [1] after him, and about midway between the two, opposed a front of common-sense against a too rapid invasion of French taste. We saw that Johnson, in *Rasselas* and in his poem on *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, was liable to the melancholy of the later eighteenth century, which expressed itself instinctively, not merely in garden-temples and marmoreal urns, but also in social legislation and better provision for the poor and sick. It has been pointed out,[2] too, that, though "he had more to do than to shed tears of sensibility over a flower", he was far from insusceptible to the appeal of lonely places, and he was a romanticist, in the technical sense, before the romantic revival at the beginning of the next century. But he did not

[1] "There has been no ingratitude so great in the history of humanity as the ingratitude of Europe to France, and Tennyson represented with great vividness this ingratitude in England." Stopford A. Brooke, *Tennyson*, London, 1894, p. 40.

[2] By Prof. W. P. Ker.

drive Pegasus with a loose rein, and he had no use for flaccid emotions. His adverse criticism of Milton's *Lycidas* is famous: "In this poem there is no nature, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting; whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted, and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. . . . This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. . . . Such equivocations are always unskilful; but here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety." So, too, of James Thomson's verse: "It is too exuberant, and sometimes may be charged with filling the ear more than the mind. . . . *Liberty*, when it first appeared, I tried to read and soon desisted. I have never tried again, and therefore will not hazard either praise or censure." And of two odes by Thomas Gray: "Some that tried them confessed their inability to understand them, though Warburton said that they were understood as well as the works of Milton and Shakespeare, which it is the fashion to admire. Garrick wrote a few lines in their praise. Some hardy champions undertook to rescue them from neglect, and in a short time many were content to be shown beauties which they could not see." The *Elegy* is excepted from criticism: "Had Gray written often thus, it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him." But, in general, the tone of Johnson's *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, written to a bookseller's commission, 1779–81, is hostile to the new forces which were shyly gathering to expression, and which, under the triple impulse of politics, philosophy and social consciousness, were to break all bounds in the near future. A modern poet,[1]

[1] Sir William Watson.

musing on *Wordsworth's Grave*, has depicted this conflict in the eighteenth century more clearly than any literary historian. He notes that, a hundred years before Wordsworth,

> Song from celestial heights had wandered down, . . .
> And donned a modish dress to charm the Town.

This was the succession of Pope to Milton, and Pope's charming muse, "incurious what life meant,"

> Saw with dull emotion—if she saw—
> The vision of the glory of the world.

But emotion—feeling—was to rise again, resurgent on the tide of human destiny:

> Men felt life's tide, the sweep and surge of it,
> And craved a living voice, a natural tone.

There was, as has been indicated, a shy response:—

> In sad stern verse the rugged scholar-sage
> Bemoaned his toil unvalued, youth uncheered

(we marked it in the *Vanity of Human Wishes*).

> His numbers wore the vesture of the age,
> But, 'neath it beating, the great heart was heard.
> From dewy pastures, uplands sweet with thyme,
> A virgin breeze refreshed the jaded day.
> It wafted Collins' lonely vesper-chime,
> It breathed abroad the frugal note of Gray.

We have listened to Gray in his *Elegy*, and heard how

> O'er the formal garden's trim parterre
> The peasant's team a ruthless furrow drew.

and we may listen to William Collins (1721–59), addressing Simplicity:—

> O Thou by *Nature* taught
> To breathe her genuine Thought,
> In Numbers warmly pure, and sweetly strong;
> Who first on Mountains wild,
> In *Fancy* loveliest child,
> Thy Babe, or *Pleasure's*, nurs'd the Pow'rs of Song!

Fancy dances back to Nature over the mountain-road.

But the new voices must not entice us from the greatness of Dr Johnson and his circle,[1] immortalized in the pages of James Boswell (1740–95), prince of biographers. Boswell, in his travels abroad, had made acquaintance with Voltaire and Rousseau, and his *Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., . . . exhibiting a view of literature and literary men in Great Britain, for nearly half a century, during which he flourished,* is the veritable picture of an age in England, which, despite all influences from abroad, was dominated by Johnson's genius. His *Dictionary of the English Language* was not merely an achievement, but a symbol. *The Gentleman's Magazine* of April, 1755, said that therein he had " beat forty French, and will beat forty more ", and a French reviewer in the same year remarked: " Mr Johnson peut se glorifier d'être en quelque sorte une Académie pour son isle ".[2] He met the French Academy on its own ground, and beat it, and so he might reasonably confront the tendencies of the times, which were to lead to the bogy of " Boney " in English nurseries a few years afterwards, and to Nelson's legacy of hate for the French.

But France conquered England, to our great profit; the sorry Frenchman from Geneva had his way; and " the ingratitude of Europe to France ", noted by a leading critic in the nineteenth century, has, happily, been repaired in the twentieth.

[1] See the volume by that name (by Mr. John Bailey) in the Home University Library.

[2] From *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. x (" The Age of Johnson "), p. 173, note 2.

CHAPTER IX

Sons of the Morning

THE romantic company of Rousseau in England did not all go to France for inspiration. True, Wordsworth, as we have seen, re-captured a kind of Petrarchan joy from the novelty of opening horizons, when he landed at Calais in 1790, and Rousseau's residence in England, 1765, where David Hume, the Scottish philosopher, befriended him, though it brought no peace to the distracted French scholar-errant, had established an early point of contact. But, partly, the contact was indirect. England and France met in Germany, we might almost say; for Germany's need of what France had to give was greater than England's, largely because of that barren century which succeeded the Thirty Years War.[1] The famous stream of Lutheran reform had led to unforeseen shoals, and the reaction of German liberty to the forces released in France was stronger than Burke approved or Johnson desired in England. The Reformation awaited completion, and we shall find its second Luther in Immanuel Kant,[2] who delivered the age from suspense: "Voltaire and Hume had not written in vain. Science seemed to demand the renunciation of the old faith. On the other hand, the heart still clung to it. At this point Kant showed a way of escape from the dilemma. His philosophy made it possible to be at once a candid thinker and an honest man of faith."

[1] 1618–48; see pp. 180–81, above.

[2] 1724–1804; the quotation which follows is from Paulsen's *Kant*; E.T., by J. E. Creighton and A. Lefevre; London, 1892, pp. 6–7.

We shall visit presently the German philosophers, who sent back to our shores, with Rousseau's help, more solid doctrine than they had taken from us: the finished product for the raw material, in commercial parlance. But before coming to that doctrine, decocted for Carlyle and Coleridge partly by the literary industry of William Taylor of Norwich,[1] we may pause a moment in France herself at the names of Pierre Letourneur and Bernardin de St-Pierre,[2] who belong to the first generation of French disciples of Rousseau. With these we may mention the brilliant couple, Jacques Necker (1732–1804), statesman and man of letters, and Suzanne (1739–94), *née* Curchod, his wife, whom Gibbon, the English historian, had wanted to marry. They acted as literary hosts in Paris, subscribing in 1776 to Letourneur's translation of Shakespeare and listening in 1787 to a reading of St-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*; and they became the parents of Mme de Staël. Besides his Shakespeare, in which he was assisted by two collaborators, and to which the French King, the Empress Catherine of Russia, and other notable persons subscribed, Letourneur translated Young's *Night Thoughts* and Macpherson's *Ossian*, and, as scholar and poet, he belonged to the coming Romantics. St-Pierre belonged to them by a yet clearer title. He was the companion of Rousseau's last years, and even exceeded at times the master's standard of sensibility. A French writer says of him, with a touch of irony, that France owes to St-Pierre "the trees in our boulevards and music in our lunatic asylums"; and, omitting the latter contribution, we may add to the former the real extension which he brought to the language of nature-description. He was Curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens under Louis XVI, and, though deprived of office during the Revolution, was restored

[1] 1765–1836. [2] Born, respectively, 1736 and 1737.

to it by Napoleon, and he possessed an exceptional feeling for, as well as knowledge of, trees and plants. When Wordsworth wrote in 1798, "'tis my faith that every flower enjoys the air it breathes," he was writing in the spirit, and almost in the letter, of St-Pierre. Like later Romantics, St-Pierre placed his sentimental lovers in the lure of tropical scenery, and he is memorable, too, for his theory of colour-vision. He discovered green in the sky as well as blue, and distinguished between shades of red, thus utilizing the evidence of science for the enhancement of romantic observation. In the generation of Chateaubriand and Mme de Staël—Rousseau's second generation—to whom we shall come back, it was remarked by William Pitt that the scenery of Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) reminded him of a painter rather than a poet; and this expression of the *mind's* eye in literature, of the revealed in preference to the seen, is a characteristic of the romantic vision, which may be traced from St-Pierre to Rossetti.

Here, on the threshold of the romantic morning, we may rehearse some of our threads. Out of the reaction against the Pleiad, who had swept poetic Europe with song, French lawgivers to Parnassus, starting nominally with Malherbe, and closing in Boileau, regulated form and diction, and imposed, through the French Academy, rules of literary composition which almost involved a rule of life. This rule was decoded in England by the genial bounty of John Dryden, whose unquenchable love for Chaucer Shakespeare and Milton preserved the fresh springs of our poetry from the high banks and narrow channels of French taste. While Bolingbroke infected Pope with admiration for "exact Racine", and with the moral principles of incuriousness and commonsense, France herself was learning from English writers how to stray outside the critics' confines, how to play

truant to convention, how to listen to birds' voices in the woods, and how a man might fend for himself decivilized. In France, Germany, and England, life grew restive under rule: in England least, because the rule lay lightest; in France, with more serene confidence, the more disastrously disappointed; and in Germany, more enthusiastically, and more thoroughly at last. Broadly speaking, for there were constant cross-currents, the movement in England was dominantly social, in France dominantly political, and in Germany dominantly philosophic. So literature, which is our sole concern, returned to "nature" at the end of the eighteenth century; returned with Chateaubriand to the genius of religion, with Scott to the genius of history, with Wordsworth to the genius of humanity, with Goethe to the genius of truth.

> On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
> Musing in solitude

was Wordsworth's epical theme, deeply based on the legacy of the eighteenth century, including Fielding's "bill of fare" in *Tom Jones*: "The provision which we have made here is no other than Human Nature." This theme led him to the song:

> Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,
> And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith;
> Of moral strength, and intellectual Power;
> Of joy in widest commonalty spread;

and

> by words
> Which speak of nothing more than what we are,

Wordsworth sought to

> arouse the sensual from their sleep
> Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain
> To noble raptures.

It was a programme closely corresponding to Goethe's praise of his dead friend, Schiller, in 1805:—

Indessen schritt sein Geist gewaltig fort,
In's Ewige des Wahren, Guten, Schönen,
Und hinter ihm, in wesenlosem Scheine,
Lag, was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine.[1]

We open our German books, not with a philosopher but with a poet. Gottfried August Bürger (1747–94) is described by Max Müller as the most eminent member of the Göttingen "Hainbund". These names require a brief explanation. They belong to a half-forgotten hour of German literary history. At Göttingen, where a university had been founded in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, and a Royal Society of Sciences in 1751, there were living about twenty years afterwards a little group of young and ardent poets, who published an organ, the *Musen-almanach*, and who were united by an oath of eternal friendship to one another, and of loyalty to the pealing muse of Klopstock. One of their number has recorded its origin. "We sallied forth," he wrote, "in the dusk to a neighbouring village. The evening was bright, and there was a full moon. We yielded ourselves wholly to the atmosphere of the idyllic surroundings. We took a draught of milk in a peasant's hut, and then repaired to the open country. Here we found a little grove of oaks"—the *Hain* of the *Bund*—"where we bound oak-leaves round our hats, laid them beneath the tree, took one another's hands, and dancing round the lonely trunk, called moon and stars to witness to our brotherhood." It was a mixture of Rousseau and Mr Pickwick, with the honoured name of the bardic Klopstock as patron-saint, and the innocent orgy would hardly be worth disturbing, since none of the young poets came

[1] Meanwhile his spirit marched on with might, towards the eternity of Truth, Goodness, Beauty; and behind him, in bodiless seeming, lay our common bondman, *das Gemeine* ("the vacant and the vain"). The quotations from Wordsworth will be found in the fragment of his *Recluse* (1798), cited as a "prospectus" to his *Excursion*, 1814.

to much fame, except for the sake of Bürger, who had danced with the rest round the oak, and who published his romantic ballad *Lenore* in their *Musen-almanach*. Perhaps, too, it is just worth noting that Bürger, like some other Romantics, was passionate in experience as well as verse. He married two sisters successively, and had desired the second in the lifetime of the first, and a third marriage had a sequel in divorce. Schiller censured his loose living, and we refer to it here because the " chains " which Rousseau discovered as the heritage of every mother's son were so often identified by his disciples with the bond of wedlock which they had voluntarily assumed.

Passing this aspect, however, we come, as Romance came, to *Lenore*, written by Bürger of the Hainbund at Göttingen in 1774. Scott imitated it in 1796—he was then 25 years of age—in an anonymous ballad called *William and Helen*, and the industrious William Taylor of Norwich has translated it the year before in the *Monthly Magazine*. Charles Lamb read that translation, and wrote about it to Coleridge: " Have you read the ballad called *Leonora* in the second number of the *Monthly Magazine* ? If you have!!!!!! " Scott had heard it once read out to him from the manuscript, and was haunted particularly by two verses:—

> Tramp! tramp! along the land they rode,
> Splash! splash! along the sea,

which he incorporated in his own version, " from despair of rendering the passage so happily." What did young Romance find in this ballad, which spread through Europe like a flame, and to which we owe the *Ancient Mariner* of Coleridge and the summons of Scott by the muse ? Partly it was the rapid movement and onomatopoeia of the verses which enraptured a generation trained to the formal procession and conventional epithets of the heroic couplet. This feature is traceable in poetry, from Tennyson's

Bedivere in *The Passing of Arthur* ("Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves") back to Virgil, Tennyson's favourite poet ("Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum"), and beyond, but its sudden effect of novelty and suprise was the boon of Bürger's *Lenore*. Partly, very largely, indeed, it was the sheer terror of Lenore's fate, which fascinated a public reacting from Richardson's domestic fiction to the "Gothic romance" inaugurated by Walpole in his *Castle of Otranto*, 1764, and continued thirty years afterwards by Mrs Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* and M. G. Lewis's *The Monk*. The shock and shudder first thrilled the pale sunshine of western afternoons, when the dead lover, rushing his bride to their nuptial bed in the grave, bids a corpse leave its coffin as he passes to swell their bridal career, and the priest with his choir to follow and bless the marriage feast, and a felon hanging in his chains to descend and howl at their bedside. There was not much for Coleridge to invent for the "ghastly crew" of his *Ancient Mariner*, 1798, when Scott had imitated Bürger in 1796:—

Half seen by fits, by fits half heard,
Pale Spectres flit along,
Wheel round the maid in dismal dance,
And howl the funeral song;
E'en when the heart's with anguish cleft,
Revere the doom of Heaven;
Her soul is from her body reft;
Her spirit be forgiven![1]

[1] The original is better; I submit with deference the following more literal version:

Now, while the fitful moonbeams glanced,
The ghosts in circle round
An awful dance in fetters danced,
And raised this screeching sound:
"Wait! wait! How hard soe'er thy lot,
With God in Heaven wrangle not!
Thy body's paid its earthly toll;
May God have mercy on thy soul!"

Lastly, there was the lure of the distant and the past; the pure joy of the historian and folklorist in exploring forgotten sagas and exhuming vanished beliefs, which Bishop Percy had fed in his *Reliques*, and Macpherson had exploited in his *Ossian*, and which Scott, after his translations from the German, was to carry to his own borders in *The Lay of the last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, etc.[1]

Adding together these motives of the *Lenore* ballad, we may almost be excused our excursion into German philosophy. Take the folklore and history first. That interest, delving into the past, and reclaiming from language, art, handicraft and sociology evidences of continuous association between the living and the dead, was present from the start. We may date it from the new Hellenism of Winckelmann, who, specializing in Greek antiquities, derived therefrom, as we read in the last chapter, " a fulness of passionate life, which Rousseau and Goethe alone among the writers of their century can be said to have approached " ; and we may mention, *honoris causa*, such a modest worker as J. H. Voss, a member of the Hainbund at Göttingen, who wrote country idylls comparable with Wordsworth's *Michael*, and translated Homer's *Iliad and Odyssey* into German hexameter verse. But the whole effect is bigger than single names. We gave Germany Lillo and Percy, Macpherson, Richardson, and the rest, and she returned to us in overflowing measure a stream of thought, reinforced by Rousseau, which was poured into the deeper channels of Scott, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Landor, Byron, Carlyle. Above all, we gave her Shakespeare, and never in literary history has so great a gift been so greatly used. Wordsworth wrote in 1815: " The Germans only, of foreign nations, are approaching

[1] Scott's way was like Chaucer's over again; first, translation from the *Roman de la Rose*, and then his own *Canterbury Tales*.

towards a knowledge and feeling of what he is. In some respects they have acquired a superiority over the fellow-countrymen of the Poet"; and it is true that, at the close of the eighteenth century, France and England were learning from Germany the interpretation of the mind which they had made. Creatively and critically alike, learned Europe spoke German in that age. In Germany, writes the Cambridge historian, "no national feeling opposed the entry of foreign ideas. Lessing had avowed himself a cosmopolitan, and Goethe and Schiller followed in his footsteps. For these reasons Germany, though unable to initiate a system of political ideas, was peculiarly fitted to receive those which might emanate from another country"[1]; to receive, to absorb, and to interpret.

We need not follow the conversion of lawless youth into staid middle-age, which marked the leaders of the Romantic movement in Germany, as well as in other countries. That inevitable psychological process was assisted there, as elsewhere, by the change of sky in France, which interrupted Dr Price's celebration with the *Reflections* of Burke, translated into German by Friedrich von Gentz, a converted revolutionary of this type. Schiller and Goethe themselves grew colder to the appeal of a world in storm, and it is not fanciful to read into Goethe's lovely lyric

> Über allen Gipfeln
> Ist Ruh' . . .
> Warte nur, balde
> Ruhest du auch,

which no one can translate, a sense of the approaching peace in political as well as in personal life. It strikes in the poetic diapason the precisely contrary note to Shelley's "locks of the approaching storm" in his

[1] By G. P. Gooch. *Cambridge Modern History*, viii, 773.

Ode to the West Wind. That some leaders turned to the Roman Church for tranquillity and discipline, and that history itself brought the calm, which, as Lucan taught Goethe, *summa tenent*, the hill-tops hold, are corroborative, not exceptional, observations.

If we may try to pin to a sheet of paper, the shabby end of every man's desire, the record of the heat and energy which glowed in Germany in that age, we reach the following list of names. In only seventy-five years, between 1724 and 1799, there were born in Germany, among other great men and women—for it was a feminine as well as a masculine movement—and there died between 1781 and 1863: Kant, Lessing, Lavater, Herder, Goethe himself, Schiller, Fichte, (Jean Paul) Richter, Hegel, the brothers August and Friedrich v. Schlegel, their wives Caroline (Michaelis) and Dorothea (Mendelssohn, afterwards Schelling), the brothers Wilhelm and Alexander v. Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Arndt, Hardenberg (Novalis), Tieck, Schelling, the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm v. Grimm, Schopenhauer, Heine.

A much more difficult task is to revive, in a narrow space, the flame in those names. There was the flame of Greece, for example. Herder is characterized by Professor Robertson as "the gatekeeper of the nineteenth century", for the sake of his pioneer work in folksong, history and Homer-study. "With Greece, the morning breaks," Herder wrote, and the brightness of an Attic morning shone on all his learned labours, and helped to oust the monopoly of the Latin grammar as the instrument of a liberal education, and so to complete what Petrarch had begun.

There was the fire in the hearth of the erudite, gentle brothers Grimm, who specialized in philology and faery. They wrote in the preface to their fairy-tales, that the sphere of their world was limited; but it expressly broke the limits set by Puttenham to the

literary *entrée* in another age. "Kings, princes," they went on, "faithful servants, honest craftsmen, above all, fishermen, millers, charcoal-burners and shepherds, all the folk who live nearest to Nature appear in it; what lies beyond is strange and inhuman."

There was the flame of patriotism, which soared to the War of Liberation. "Through Fichte," says a German historian, "the name 'German nation' first regained a meaning and a value." Arndt sang that meaning into hymns:—

> Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland? . . .
> Es zog aus Berlin ein tapferer Held . . .
> Der Gott, der Eisen wachsen liess,
> Der wollte keine Knechte;

and Heine, driven out of Germany to his mattress-grave in Paris, wrote the most moving song of all:—

> Ich hatte einst ein schönes Vaterland.

Einst, once upon a time. For the shadow of Metternich had spread across the hope of liberation, blotting out the radiance of the Attic morning. It swallowed up religious liberty with the rest. Heine, the son of a Jewish merchant, ate his heart out in exile, and in Germany, where Moses Mendelssohn, the son of a Jewish pedlar, had been Lessing's colleague and friend, and Schlegel and Schelling, two pillars of Romanticism, had successively married his daughter, anti-Semitism established its political home.

There was the flame of humane scholarship, typified by the *Ansichten der Natur* of A. von Humboldt, and by his brother's activity as Prussian minister for education. There was the Shakespeare-flame of the Schlegel family and Ludwig von Tieck, and there were the science and philosophy of Kant, Lavater, Schelling, Hegel,[1] Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer, and Goethe

[1] Professor C. H. Herford writes: "Rousseau has been called 'the father of Romanticism', and there is hardly an element in it which

himself. Richter, "the giant Jean Paul, who has power to escape out of hearsay," as Carlyle called him in his *Lectures on Heroes and Hero-worship*, enlarged the bounds of German prose, wrote delicate idylls of village-life, and became a prophet of the Romantics. Novalis, pursuing the Blue Flower—was it distance, the lure to Romance, which lent it its colour?—merged the quest in the attainment ("die Welt wird Traum, der Traum wird Welt"), and can only be understood by language as approximate as his own: by Tennyson's

> Little flower, but *if* I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is,

by George Meredith's

> Look now where Colour, the soul's bridegroom, makes
> The house of heaven splendid for the bride.
> To him as leaps a fountain she awakes,
> In knotting arms, yet boundless: him beside,
> She holds the flower to heaven, and by his power
> Brings heaven to the flower.

Higher than all, as high as Kant's, rose the flame of Goethe and Schiller, who almost inevitably were drawn together after 1794, and who, by their correspondence, their hospitality, their theatre, and their reviews, sum up the tendencies which they represent. More and more certainly, as the eighteenth century drew to its close, Europe turned to the philosopher at Königsberg, and to the two poets at Weimar, for the revelation of the meaning of the changes which the century had brought. France herself, by the genius

did not receive from Hegel its final appreciation. On the intellectual side it may be regarded as a process—partly of development, partly of elimination—which the potent but ill-organized conceptions of the Frenchman underwent in the *milieu* created by the ideas to which the German gave their most organic expression" (*The Age of Wordsworth*, London, 1897, p. xvi).

[*Photo. F. Bruckmann, A.—G., München*

GOETHE

I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things—TENNYSON

[*face p.* 240

of Mme de Staël,[1] a romantic liver and writer, sought in her *Allemagne*, 1810, a way back to Rousseau's ideas from the revolutionaries who had betrayed them; and, founded securely on the labours of patient and accurate observers, devoted to *Quellenkunde*, or the science of sources, in history, jurisprudence, philosophy, medieval and antiquarian research, a reconciliation was effected between the Inner and the Outer, between the Ego and the non-Ego, between the individual Mind and the external World, elaborated by Kant in his three great Critiques of *reine Vernunft* (pure Reason), *praktische Vernunft* (practical Reason), and *Urteilskraft* (Judgment), and exemplified by Schiller in his *Wallenstein* and other plays, and by Goethe, supremely, in his *Faust*. And where this reconciliation fell short, and a gap occurred in the final harmony, and the " Unzulängliche " (imperfect), of the last chorus of *Faust*, did not become " Ereigniss " (fact), there German Romantics discovered the elf of Irony, with which they made such exquisite play, and which lurks in the fay-world of Sir James Barrie and Pirandello.

Experience was transformed, in other words. " The world must be romanticized," declared Novalis, and it was of the essence of the romantic transformation to regard the world in all its parts as a whole. Romance was not merely international or cosmopolitan; it was interstellar and cosmic in its affinities. It cast, according to a modern writer,[2] " on the screen of an imaginary past the projection of its unfulfilled desires "; and so Mme de Staël could write of it, in the period of its formation, that it " expresses our religion and recalls our history ". But the religion and the history were alike reviewed through a medium of romantic interpretation. It was the religion

[1] 1766–1817.
[2] G. Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, London, 1914, p. 39.

of Chateaubriand, her contemporary, which Mme de Staël had in mind, in his *Génie du Christianisme*, 1802, where he sought to prove, that, " of all religions which ever existed, the Christian religion is the most poetic, the most human, the most favourable to liberty, arts and letters ". Much of the history of the Middle Ages would require revision by this calculus, and the new medievalism of the Romantics, while it added so much beauty to art and poetry, left many aspects of human experience out of account. We come close to the core of Romance, however the movement be defined, when we read, on the high authority of Professor Saintsbury, that " the best and most characteristic part of Byron is only Chateaubriand in English, in verse, and with no crucifixes ". For in order to romanticize the world, according to the rescript of Novalis, the seeing eye was more important than the thing seen, and if the eye could see *through*, and could pierce to a universe beyond appearance, the thing seen might disappear in the further vision. So not only Coleridge's philosophy, and Byron's psychology, but even the politics of Karl Marx were unfolded from Hegel's transcendental thought.

The poet's surrender to this consciousness may be measured by the boy in Wordsworth's *Excursion*, who

> had felt the power
> Of Nature, and already was prepared,
> By his intense conceptions, to receive
> Deeply the lesson deep of love, which he,
> Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught
> To feel intensely, cannot but receive.

Wordsworth stopped at the *mood*. In the youth's vision

> Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
> And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
> Beneath him. Far and wide the clouds were touched,

And in their silent faces could he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy ; his spirit drank
The spectacle : sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him ; they swallowed up
His animal being ; in them did he live,
And by them did he live ; they were his life.

And these verses from Book I of *The Excursion* should be compared with *Tintern Abbey* of 1798, in which Wordsworth invoked

that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened : that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood,
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

But there were those who did not stop at the mood. Byron, Carlyle, William Godwin, Karl Marx, even Shelley, up to the limits of his practical ability, sought not only to receive but to apply " the lesson deep of love "; and forms of Socialism, not even always Christian, were quite logically, but not always practicably, brought down to active life from the sleep of the body and the suspension of the animal being. Since the philosophy of Romance was made in Germany, we may perhaps quote a German professor's view of its value in action. In the heyday of the Prussian military State, and in the centenary year of (Hardenberg) Novalis's death, it was written of that visionary:—

> In studying these fantastic ravings of an eccentric and uncontrolled imagination, one understands how a generation, whose reason and will had been benumbed by their influence, should have become unfit for discharging the simple duties of the citizen and the patriot ; one comprehends Napoleon's distrust for " these German ideologists " ; and one sees the inner justice of the political humiliation of Germany in 1806.[1]

The student of literature may perpend his reply. But is it quite certain, he will ask, that the generation before 1914 was so much better fitted to train German youth in the simple duties of citizen and patriot than the generation before 1806 ? And were the idealists distrusted by Napoleon less careful of their country's political future than the realists trusted by Bismarck ?

However this may be—and it is not our direct concern—the bridge of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in Germany, France, and England, was thronged with a wonderful crowd (literally, a crowd full of wonder), renewing at Nature's altar the oath of devoted allegiance:—

> I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains ; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth ; of all the mighty world
> Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
> And what perceive ; well pleased to recognize,
> In nature and the language of the sense,

[1] Kuno Francke, *History of German Literature as determined by Social Forces*. London, 1901, p. 428.

> The author of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being.

Wordsworth himself referred the last line but six of this passage from *Tintern Abbey* to Young's *Night Thoughts*, vi, 427:—

> And half-create the wondrous world they see ;

and we may compare it, thought by thought, with his own transcendent *Ode* (1803–6) on *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*. There we find the " Presence which is not to be put by ", and the apostrophe to the meadows and the hills:—

> Forbode not any severing of our loves !

But where, ultimately, were those loves knit ? Nowhere else but in France and Germany, in Geneva and Königsberg, by Rousseau and Kant. Read Paulsen on Kant, if Kant's philosophy makes too hard reading:—

> Whether you rule states and win battles, whether you render humanity richer by miracles of art or science, whether with weary feet you tread the furrows as a ploughboy, or on the remotest skirts of the city you make harness or make shoes,— none of these things have any significance at all for your moral worth. For this standard it matters not what external fortune or natural gifts you may possess, but all depends upon the disposition and faithfulness with which you perform your duty. If you do not follow your own inclinations and moods, but obey the moral law within, you will rise to a plane of grandeur and dignity that will always remain far from those who follow after happiness, or guide their actions merely according to maxims of prudence. You belong then, whatever your place in this earthly existence, to the kingdom of freedom ; you are a citizen of the intelligible world, citizen of the Kingdom of God.

Thus, Paulsen on Kant, and Wordsworthians will

readily supply parallel readings from the English poet. We submit but two: the first, from *Resolution and Independence*, 1802:—

> I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
> The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;
> Of him[1] who walked in glory and in joy
> Following his plough, along the mountain-side:
> By our own spirits are we deified;

the second, from the *Character of the Happy Warrior*, 1806:—

> 'Tis he whose law is reason; who depends
> Upon that law as on the best of friends; . . .
> 'Tis finally, the Man, who, lifted high,
> Conspicuous object in a Nation's eye,
> Or left unthought-of in obscurity—
> Who, with a toward or untoward lot,
> Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not—
> Plays, in the many games of life, that one,
> Where what he most doth value must be won; . . .
> Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth, . . .
> Or he must fall, to sleep without his fame, . . .
> Finds comfort in himself and in his cause,
> And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
> His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause.

And, as to Rousseau's part in Wordsworth's rendering of Kant's moral philosophy, take, among many authorities, Paulsen's evidence again:—

> These moral views corresponded to the temper of the period, which in Germany enthusiastically honoured Rousseau as the true pioneer and guide. . . . In conclusion, I may add a word regarding the coping-stone of the Kantian philosophy, the doctrine of the primacy of the practical reason. For three hundred years the maxim of the Renaissance, that education is the presupposition of morality, had been accepted. Then Rousseau entered his emphatic protest. This came closely home to Kant. . . . So long as one believed that through

[1] Robert Burns.

> science and philosophy it was possible to obtain absolute insight into the nature of things, and the being of God, these things appeared to have some part in constituting the dignity of man. Now Kant declares that knowledge of this kind is absolutely impossible, and in its place he set *practical faith.* . . . And this faith is the only way of approach to the super-sensible world. Learning of the schools, theology and metaphysics are of no advantage here.

Again, Wordsworthians will have no difficulty in finding parallel readings; we submit one only from *Lyrical Ballads*,[1] the cornerstone of the English romantic movement:—

> Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
> Our meddling intellect
> Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things,—
> We murder to dissect.
> Enough of Science and of Art;
> Close up those barren leaves;
> Come forth, and bring with you a heart
> That watches and receives.

The joint-author of *Lyrical Ballads*, was Samuel Taylor Coleridge.[2] His Devonian blood corrected the austerity of Wordsworth's native Cumberland, and his attraction to the more mystical side of the bold young poets' programme in poetry is displayed in the *Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, which opened their epoch-making volume. As Wordsworth's early verse shows his dependence on James Thomson and Edward Young, so Coleridge's extraction out of the eighteenth century is shown by his early dependence on William Collins and Thomas Gray. His *Religious Musings*, which justified the Revolution—that dominating problem and inspiration—as a sign of the triumph of love, harmonizing and unifying all, confess the mood of Schiller's *Räuber*, and should be read, if at all, in connexion with his softer *Ode to*

[1] 1798. [2] 1772–1834.

France, composed in February, 1798. But the true Coleridge of poetry is the author of *Kubla Khan*, *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and a few other poems, and his finest gift to the nineteenth century consists in his critical work, for which Saintsbury, the historian of criticism, unites him with Aristotle and Longinus. Here, however, we would quote from Coleridge himself his account, in the *Biographia Literaria*, of his debt to German philosophy:—

> "The writings of the illustrious sage of Koenigsberg," he declared in chapter ix of that work, "at once invigorated and disciplined my understanding. The originality, the depth, and the compression of the thoughts, the novelty and subtlety, yet solidity and importance of the distinctions; the adamantine chain of the logic . . . took possession of me as with the giant's hand. After fifteen years' familiarity with them, I still read these [the *Critiques*] and all his other productions with undiminished delight and increasing admiration".

In Fichte, he added, he found "the keystone of the arch", and "in Schelling's *Natur-Philosophie* and the *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, I first found a genial coincidence with much that I had toiled out for myself, and a powerful assistance in what I had yet to do".

Need we add to this weight of evidence to the literary relations between Germany and England, in the years preceding their alliance on the field of Waterloo? Taylor of Norwich, Carlyle, Scott, Coleridge, Wordsworth, responded directly to the contact. Less directly Byron, Shelley, who translated scenes from Goethe's *Faust*, Southey, Landor, Keats, Lamb, De Quincey, Hazlitt, William Godwin; the dramatic school founded by Kotzebue [1]; the historical school founded

[1] 1761–1819. It is interesting to note that *Lovers' Vows*, which was acted at Mansfield Park (in the novel of that name by Jane Austen) in 1814, was translated by Mrs Inchbald from Kotzebue's *Das Kind*

by Niebuhr[1]: these are among the manifestations of the effects on the English mind of that national awakening in Germany, which was at the same time a new beginning in European letters. The great name of Goethe dominates it, and Adolf Bartels, a German historian, despite his excess of chauvinism, was yet justified in writing three large volumes of *Introduction to World-Literature*,[2] " in connexion with the life and achievement of Goethe." We need not, and do not, adopt the extreme Teutonism of his survey, which was made, unfortunately, in the era when Prussian national sentiment had forgotten Europe. But the literary influence of Goethe, " hardly to be paralleled before or since," is admitted, by the objective testimony of Professor Saintsbury, to be " scarcely a matter of controversy ". Goethe was *first*, he tells us, to bring about " the last great change that has been seen in European literature "; and, " among the most remarkable impressions that philosophy has made upon literature," he records " the inbreak of partly German thought, through Coleridge, into England, and through various (in the first place, mainly Goethean) channels into France ".[3]

" The last great change that has been seen in

der Liebe, and that *The Stranger*, in which Miss Fotheringay appeared at Chatteris, in Thackeray's *Pendennis*, 1850, was translated from Kotzebue's *Menschenhass und Reue*.

[1] 1776–1831. [2] Munich, 1913.

[3] See Saintsbury's " Conclusion of the Whole Matter " (a unique piece of condensed criticism) in the final (12th) volume of *Periods of European Literature*, Edinburgh, 1907. Space must be found for one authentic example, out of the writers mentioned in this paragraph. William Hazlitt (1778–1820), a very English writer, said of Coleridge and Wordsworth in 1798: " The sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of Spring."

European literature." It does not lie within the scope of this essay to trace the effects of that change, or to examine its sequel of English literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Our purpose has been to discuss, between dates roughly corresponding to 1300 and 1800, or between the first Renaissance in the South and the second Renaissance in the North, or between Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Rousseau, Goethe, Wordsworth, the foreign relations of English literature, and so to follow, down to the period of " the last great change ", the making of the mind of England as a Great Power in European letters.

This form of words has been selected in order to suggest an analogy with the making of the mind of Europe, of which England is a part, by statesmen, as distinct from men of letters. If we track that mind through its Treaties—Westphalia, 1648; Utrecht, 1713; Paris, 1815; Versailles, 1871—instead of through its books, we see each Treaty the seed-plot of new, devastating warfare, in which the ghosts of Cæsar and Barbarossa still haunted the pillows of Kings. If we seek the keywords of politics in Europe —*Virtù*, *Louis Quatorze*, *Empire*, *Kultur*—we are caught up in the toils which extracted the Renaissance out of Humanism, wars of religion out of the Reformation, territorial wars out of the wars of religion, and wars of revenge out of the territorial wars. We may briefly annotate this survey, pointing to so gloomy a conclusion, and may submit three such notes, each from an authority of great repute:—

(1) " Petrarch's efforts to return to the Old World of the Latin classics led to his discovery of the New World of the Italian Renaissance."—*Sir John Sandys.*

(2) " So far as concerns the main current of intellectual and literary interests, the German Renaissance is the Reformation."—*Sir Richard Jebb.*

(3) "Had there been no Luther, there could never have been a Louis XIV."—*John Neville Figgis.*

Across these stepping-stones we leap four centuries of European history, from Petrarch's birth in 1304 to the death of Louis XIV in 1715. Petrarch ushered in the Italian Renaissance; its German sequel was Luther's Reformation; and—to leap the fifth and sixth centuries—had there been no Louis XIV, there would have been no Bourbon for Robespierre, and perhaps no Bismarck for the Hohenzollern.

It is tempting in this context to quote, as a kind of final stepping-stone, a comment by Sir Stanley Leathes on the Treaty of 1648, which closed the Thirty Years War, arising out of the Reformation. "The War of 1870," he writes, "was needed to efface completely the consequences of this Treaty." The dictum deepens our sense of gloom. We know that the war of 1914 was needed to efface the consequences of the Treaty of 1871; and so we are provided with links in an unbroken chain of European history from Petrarch's recovery of the Latin classics to the Armistice of 1918. For "the Renaissance itself", we have read, "was the work of Cicero's spirit."

But, though an analogy may be suggested between the mind of Europe, as expressed in her Treaties, and the same mind speaking through her books, we must not press the contrast too far. Somehow, it is obvious, there escaped the essence of pre-Lutheran reform which Petrarch urged on Boccaccio, and Chaucer caught in his Italian journey. Somehow, as the ideas of the Humanists travelled north out of Florence, and Mirandola's Greek and Hebrew studies were extended by Biblical scholars to attacks on the entrenchments of the Church, evil political passions overtook the curiosity of theologians, and the control of opinion spread into a lust for secular dominion. Somehow, the fair beginning of the Renaissance

in Petrarch's worship of Cicero, which was contaminated, even at the start, by a moment's conspiracy with Rienzi, was turned by Machiavellian politicians to the service of benevolent despots, and culminated in 1806, five hundred years after Petrarch's birth, in the usurpation by Napoleon of the fallen sceptre of the Holy Roman Emperors. How all this happened, and how its happening affected England's foreign relations, involving her in religious and political wars with Spain, France and Germany successively, it is the province of historians to relate. Our simpler function is to point out that the two movements marched together; that out of the same fair beginning, which links the Treaty of 1648 backwards to Petrarch and the Humanists and forwards to the wars of 1870 and 1914, there came the procession of noble writers, from Ariosto to Goethe, whose works have occurred in this essay. We have marked their common devotion, in varying degrees, to the problem of government as well as style. We have marked their constant perception that the greatness of their country as a literary power depends on, or is bound up in, her greatness as a political power; that the "ensample of a good governour", in Spenser's words, will assist her excellence in language. We saw that the "titles manifold" of Wordsworth's sonnet, in which he protested that

> We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakespeare spake, the faith and morals hold
> Which Milton held,

went right back through five hundred years to Petrarch's similar response to the summons by ancient to modern Rome. In a sense, our poets have been statesmen, and many of them have been so generous in their statecraft—we may instance Philip Sidney and Rupert Brooke—that they have followed our

politicians to our wars. Byron himself chose death or freedom.

Yet the mind of England, formed by her statesmen and expressed in her laws, has been subject to other influences than the mind of England formed by her men of letters and expressed in her books. Andrew Fletcher, a Scottish patriot, recorded in 1703 that he "knew a very wise man who believed that, if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation"; and Dr Johnson, in the verses which he added to Oliver Goldsmith's *Traveller*, hinted at the same belief when he wrote:—

> How small, of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!

For there is a truth higher than the diplomatist's, a security firmer than the politician's, and the mind of Europe in literature from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century presents a more tranquil picture to the moral historian than he derives from the record of war opening into war out of the parchments of the peacemakers.

The study of English literature in its foreign relations reassures the student of foreign policy as to the values of conduct and the endurance of ideals. He crosses the frontiers of religion and nationality, for which so much blood has been spilt, and sees in his nation's literature, fed by and feeding the literatures of its allies, a coherent part of a common movement towards self-realization and self-expression. He sees, though dimly and imperfectly, all the progress of mankind as a single process, no part of which comes undivided, and no part of which comes in full measure. He perceives that the deposit of art is least of all subject to the temporal and personal errors of other modes of expression, so that our art is purer than our

laws and our laws are nobler than our practice. Herein lies the reward of art-study. It raises enjoyment to a higher power. It teaches us an undiluted language, and bestows on men the rare faculty of communion beyond the region of facts:—

> Art—wherein man nowise speaks to men,
> Only to mankind—Art may tell a truth
> Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,
> Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.
> So may you paint your picture, twice show truth,
> Beyond mere imagery on the wall—
> So, note by note, bring music from your mind,
> So write a book shall mean beyond the facts,
> Suffice the eye and save the soul besides.[1]

The art of England had been predominantly literary, and we look to English men of letters for the spiritual evaluation of the works and business of their age. The common, heroic material of the *chansons de geste*; the common terror of the Black Death; the common consolation of the Bible; the common gentleness of knights surviving feudalism; Chaucer visiting Petrarch, and Spenser imitating Ariosto; Spenser again and Milton emulating Tasso's perfection; Shakespeare and the Elizabethan lyrists singing to Ronsard's tunes; Boileau imposing his rule, and Dryden testing its validity; Richardson, Thomson and Young unsealing the fount of human tears; Swift and Defoe preparing the insurrection of Rousseau; Rousseau sowing the harvest reaped by German philosophers—these have been aspects of our foreign relations, more significant than war and peace, which have made English literature a truer mirror of the English mind than any other form in which it has found expression. The wise student of human endeavour will seek its reflection in that

[1] Robert Browning, *The Ring and the Book, fin.*

mirror, and if, impatient of the mists, he seek, like the prisoner in Plato's cave, for a revelation of the brighter day to be,

> Till life stands prouder near the poets' dream,

he may prove George Meredith's contention

> that we have paved a way for feet
> Now stumbling; air less cavernous, and air
> That feeds the soul, we breathe.

And lastly, lest he hang new liberties in old chains, he may ponder Meredith's warning:—

> What figures will be shown the century hence?
> What lands intact? We do but know that Power
> From Piety divorced, though seen immense,
> Shall sink on envy of a wayside flower.

APPENDIX I

The Heroic-Couplet (page 21)

THE heroic-couplet consists of two verses of five feet (decasyllabic) rhyming with one another, and " Chaucer's greatest metrical gift to England ", says his eminent modern editor, Professor Skeat, " was his use of the heroic-couplet, which he used with remarkable success, first in the *Legend of Good Women*, and soon after in his *Canterbury Tales* " (*Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vi, lxii). He used it, that is to say, for purposes of sustained narration, corresponding to the epical metres of Homer and Virgil in antiquity. Historically, the English epical heroic-couplet is traced by Skeat (iii, 383) to the French lyrist and musician, Guillaume de Machault (*c.* 1290–1377), who was secretary to the King of Bohemia, and was later attached to the French Court. Machault, the French founder of this metre, it is to be noted, displayed so much ingenuity in metrical invention that he is accounted the head of his native school of so-called *Rhétoriqueurs*, who flourished chiefly in the fifteenth century, and whose best-known member, Guillaume Crétin (died *c.* 1525) gave his name to Cretinism, as a synonym for gilded emptiness in lyrical verse. Thus, " rhetoric " in this sense is defined by Jusserand (*Ronsard*, 31) as " the art of speaking well. For the *rhétoriqueurs*," he continues, " speaking well meant speaking differently from the crowd ; the more ingenious and complicated one was, the further one was removed from the crowd, and the better one spoke. Sounds and words came first, and thought second. So their art of *bien dire* (speaking well) became, most of the time, an art of *rien dire* (saying nothing)."

But Chaucer, importing the heroic-couplet, did not import the empty "rhetoric" into which Machault's metrical experiments were to decline. He seized its epical value, and in his hands, and in those of his successors, it became a favourite channel for the conveyance of narrative verse. It had to compete at an early date, however, with the superior claim of blank verse (decasyllabic verses unrhymed ; see p. 38, n. 1), as the chief English epical measure ; and it is interesting to trace the gradual impatience of narrative poets with the restrictive confines of the heroic-couplet. Successive examples of that metre may be selected from five poets, extending over two hundred years :—

Dryden, *floruit* 1670,
Pope, *floruit* 1730,
Crabbe, *floruit* 1810
Keats, *floruit* 1820, and
William Morris, a Chaucer-revivalist, *floruit* 1870.

Attention is directed in this comparison, not to the contents of the extracts, but to the varieties in technique which they severally display, and which illustrate the causes of the choice of blank verse, for epical purposes, by Milton and Tennyson, in preference to the metre acclimatized in England in the fourteenth century.

(1) From Dryden's *Epistle to Sir Robert Howard* :—

Of moral knowledge poesy was queen,
And still she might, had wanton wits not been ;
Who, like ill guardians, lived themselves at large,
And, not content with that, debauched their charge.
Like some brave captain, your successful pen
Restores the exiled to her crown again ;
And gives us hope that having seen the days
When nothing flourished but fanatic bays,
All will at length in this opinion rest,
"A sober prince's government is best."

(2) From Pope's *Essay on Man* :—

Hope humbly then : with trembling pinions soar ;
Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore.
What future bliss he gives not thee to know,
But gives that hope to be thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the human breast :
Man never is, but always to be blest.
The soul uneasy and confined, from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.
Lo ! the poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind
Sees God in Clouds, or hears him in the wind ;
His soul proud science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk or milky way.

(3) From Crabbe's *Tales* (No. III) :—

Far different he from that dull plodding tribe,
Whom it was his amusement to describe ;
Creatures no more enliven'd than a clod,
But treading still as their dull fathers trod ;
Who lived in times when not a man had seen
Corn sown by drill, or thresh'd by a machine :
He was of those whose skill assigns the prize
For creatures fed in pens, and stalls, and sties ;
And who, in places where improvers meet,
To fill the land with fatness, has a seat ;
Who in large mansions live like petty kings,
And speak of farms but as amusing things ;
Who plans encourage, and who journals keep,
And talk with lords about a breed of sheep.

(4) From Keats's *Endymion* :—

What misery most drowningly doth sing
In lone Endymion's ear, now he has raught
The goal of consciousness ? Ah, 'tis the thought,
The deadly feel of solitude : for lo !
He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow
Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild
In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pil'd,
The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west,
Like herded elephants ; nor felt, nor prest,

Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air ;
But far from such companionship to wear
An unknown time, surcharg'd with grief, away,
Was now his lot.

(5) From William Morris's *Earthly Paradise* :—

Then might be seen how hard is this world's lot
When such a marvel was our grief forgot,
And what a thing the world's joy is to bear,
When on our hearts the broken bonds of care
Had left such scars, no man of us could say
The burning words upon his lips that lay ;
Since, trained to hide the depths of misery
Amidst that joy, no more our tongues were free.
Ah, then it was indeed when first I knew,
When all our wildest dreams seemed coming true,
And we had reached the gates of Paradise
And endless bliss, at what unmeasured price
Man sets his life.

Beginning in (1) and maturing in (2), we note the Chaucerian couplet growing into a self-contained unit, which closed the sense with the sound, and tended more and more to epigrammatic forcibleness. This feature, perfected by Pope, was compensatory. As long as poets deliberately preferred to forgo the delights of variety by including their sentences in twenty syllables with regularly alternating beats, with rhyme recurring in a fixed place, and with a halt at every twentieth syllable, they are compelled to provide a compensatory pleasure for the reader by extra dexterity of expression. The metre in itself is insufferably monotonous, so the monotony of sound was disguised by ever-renewed triumphs of exquisite neatness in arrangement. Within the confines of a metre more rigid in its rules than any before or since invented, Pope succeeded in cultivating a style so admirably fitted to it that his couplets fall on our ears

with a constantly fresh surprise, a constantly new delight.

In (3), and, curiously, in (5), where Morris went back to a fashion which his own generation had abandoned, the monotony is more obvious again. The ear waits for the rhyme, which tends to become an annoyance, because, while the metre is maintained with little or no relaxation, its compensating genius has departed. Crabbe's respect for the couplet is hardly less devout than Pope's. He, too, works up to the twentieth syllable through regular dissyllabic beats, and the rhythm of each couplet is complete. But the spirit of completeness had disappeared. The sense stumbles from couplet to couplet on the tap-tapping crutch of the relative pronoun "whom", "who", "whose", "and who", "who", "who", "who"; and the variety denied to the sound, which Pope introduced through the sense, thus making the metre the one best vehicle of his meaning, is denied by Crabbe altogether. He used for narrative purposes a metre adapted to terse expression, without attempting to readapt it to his different design. Morris, when he revived it at a much later date, took Chaucer as his master, and worked more or less consciously in an artificial mould. His use of the couplet in (5) owed very much to (4), to which we now come, but the languor and monotony of the metre, unaided by Pope's stimulation, was not altogether unsuited to Morris's design.

Keats in (4) broke the spell of the heroic-couplet, as it had been refashioned in the eighteenth century. He rebelled against the tyranny of the twentieth syllable, suffering the stress to pass, hardly noted, into the succeeding line or lines. It is not merely that the sense overflowed from one couplet to another, but the ear waited, not for the word which rhymed, but for the more important words beyond it. "He

raught (reached) the goal of consciousness," and "goal" is the significant word. "The thought, the deadly feel, of solitude," and the quick substitution of the finer word "feel" hurries us past the rhyme in "thought". "With flowers running wild in pink and purple chequer"—the element of delight in these sounds lies in the alliteration of "p", which obliterates the passing impression of the less eminent rhyming word "wild"; and before "wear" in the last couplet is completed by "away", the reader's attention has been distracted from its rhyme to "air" by the immense sound of "an unknown time, surcharged with grief". Keats, that is, disguised the rhymes which Pope had emphasized, and the disguise led to its disuse, and to the return of poets to blank verse in narration.

There is a contrary process, which is just worth illustrating here, and by which Blank Verse can almost disguise itself as a rhymed measure. Rhyme is the recurrence of sounds at regular intervals; and it would be hard to say how the following stanzas differ from rhyming verse:—

> Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
> The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
> To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
> The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
> So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.
> Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
> And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
> On lips that are for others; deep as love,
> Deep as first love, and wild with all regret,
> O Death in Life, the days that are no more.
>
> From Tennyson's *Princess*.

Here Tennyson, reversing the way of Keats, who relaxed the regularity of the heroic-couplet, deliberately created in Blank Verse an impression of rhyme.

He repeated his sounds till he produced a rhyme-illusion. " The days that are no more," " sad and strange," " dying," " deep," " death," " love,"—these are actual word-recurrences, and, among recurring sounds, we may note the " d " in " dark . . dawns ", the " kase "-sound in " casement . . . square ", the " o " in " slowly grows ", the " d " in " dear . . . death ", the " f " in " fancy feigned ", the " i " in " wild . . . life ", and many more. By the triumph of Tennyson's rhetoric, Blank Verse stole the laurel of the heroic-couplet.

APPENDIX II

Tasso (page 40)

TORQUATO TASSO, Italian poet, and the son of an Italian poet, was born in 1544, and died in 1595. His mastery in epic verse, acknowledged by Spenser in his life-time, is derived from his *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered), written in the national octave stanzas. There were three versions of this epic of the First Crusade : (1) in 1576, issued without Tasso's consent, (2) in 1581, which is the authorized version, and (3) in 1593, revised after the poet had spent seven years (1579–86) in an alienist prison. The revised version was re-named "Jerusalem Conquered", but this product of an unhappy time is now forgotten, and it is the glowing poem of 1581 which survives as the "Christian *Iliad*". Tasso himself would have us call it by this name, and Hallam, never lavish in praise, concedes the claim in the following words : "In the variety of occurrences, the change of scene and images, and of the trains of sentiment connected with them in the reader's mind, we cannot place the *Iliad* on a level with the *Jerusalem*. And again, by the manifest unity of subject, and by the continuance of the crusading army before the walls of Jerusalem, the poem of Tasso has a coherence and singleness, which is comparatively wanting to that of Virgil." In Chapter V we have noted that Milton, in his Latin poem (1639) to the Marquis Manso, recalled the friendship of Manso in his youth with Tasso in his broken middle age :—

> Te pridem magno felix concordia Tasso
> Junxit.

APPENDIX II

It was at Manso's house, after 1586, that Tasso completed the *Gerusalemme Conquistata*, and Manso painted his portrait, and wrote his life. Third in the succession to Spenser and Milton as great foreign poets under the spell of the Italian epicist is Goethe, whose *Torquato Tasso*, 1788, dramatized, partly out of his personal experience as a court-poet at Weimar, Tasso's infinitely harder lot at the court of the reigning d'Este of Ferrara. To Tasso Goethe wrote :—

> 'Twas thou alone who from a life of limits
> Didst raise me to a splendid liberty ;
> Who tookest from my shoulders every load,
> And gav'st me freedom, that my soul might grow
> And spend itself in undistracted song ;
> Aye, all the merit that my labour earns
> Is due to thee, and thine be all the thanks.

And till Sir William Watson in our own day wrote of Wordsworth, "This voice sang me free," no nobler tribute is on record in the enchiridion of poets' praise.

Tasso, like Shelley,[1] belongs to the poets who are also musicians, and, as Romain Rolland reminds us, "inventors of opera recognized Tasso's genius and profited by his ideas on poetry and music, and their union in drama." The profitable union was effected in the pastoral *Aminta*, 1573, Tasso's Arcadian romance, which was closely followed in time and manner by the *Pastor Fido* of Guarini, Tasso's constant

[1] Shelley, too, may be cited among the major poets who have written about Tasso. He was at Ferrara in 1818, and made the following interesting comment on the handwriting of the two Ferrarese poets. That of Ariosto, he wrote, "is a small, firm, and pointed character, expressing, as I should say, a strong and keen, but circumscribed energy of mind ; that of Tasso is large, free, and flowing, except that there is a checked expression in the midst of its flow. It is the symbol of an intense and earnest mind, exceeding at times its own depth, and admonished to return by the chilliness of the waters of oblivion striking upon its adventurous feet."

and conscious rival. It is the *Pastor Fido* rather than the *Aminta* which proved in succeeding years the fruitful source of sylvan fables in Italy itself, in Spain and in Portugal. But the vogue fell out of favour, possibly for the prosaic cause that railways opened up the countryside, and neither work, despite its lyric beauties, is much consulted to-day. Tasso's early epical *Rinaldo*, his frigid tragedy, *Torrismondo*, and a blank verse poem on the Creation may also be passed over. It is as author of *Gerusalemme Liberata* that he won immortal renown and found his way into every language (into English, by R. Carew, 1594, and Edward Fairfax, 1600), including Arabic and Chinese. While metrists as impeccable as Milton have admired the art of the poem, its tales are said to have been chanted by peasants in their huts and by galley-slaves at their oars.

APPENDIX III

Euphuism (page 48)

EUPHUISM was at first the name given by Gabriel Harvey in 1589 to certain characteristics of prose style displayed eminently by John Lyly, in his *Euphues, The Anatomy of Wit*, 1579. In this sense Euphuism was chiefly a lavish use of metaphor and simile borrowed from natural history and physiology, to which Lyly was addicted as much by taste and inventiveness as by the authority of the reference-books and wonder-books of his day. But there had been Euphuism in England before *Euphues*, and there were forms of Euphuism in other countries independent of Lyly's romance. The name was extended, accordingly, to various rhetorical devices, such as inversion, antithesis, alliteration, balance, parallelism, etc., by which prose was heightened and dignified. The Courts of Europe "parleyed Euphuism" in the sixteenth century because that exquisite style suited the new ethic and the new learning. In prose, as in verse, the rhetoricians and the moralists marched together, and Lyly, a Court *attaché* and a Cambridge *savant*, was particularly well equipped for the double rôle. Not every one—probably very few—were deeply impressed by his views on educational reform, but they leaped to his words and their arrangement. His tricks and figures of style, which were endlessly varied and expanded, and adorned with ornaments derived from all kinds of curious lore, supplied the wits at the Court of Queen Elizabeth with a new fashionable diction,

which precisely suited the needs of the hour. As their physical horizon had been pushed back by the discoveries of the Navigators, and as their moral outlook was expanding under the researches of the Reformers, so their command of language and their sense of power over its means of expression were enhanced by such resources as are exemplified in the following passage :

> The sun shineth upon the dunghill and is not corrupted, the diamond lieth in the fire and is not consumed, the crystal toucheth the toad and is not poisoned, the bird *Trochilus* liveth by the mouth of the crocodile and is not spoiled ; a perfect wit is never bewitched with kindness, neither enticed with lasciviousness.

Scholars have tracked these similes to their sources in Erasmus, Albertus Magnus, Pliny, and others, but contemporaries welcomed them for the sake of their new expressiveness, which enlarged the boundaries of common talk ; and, though Sir Philip Sidney was ready to deplore " honey-flowing Matron Eloquence apparelled, or rather disguised, in a Courtesan-like painted affectation ", and Hallam, to skip the centuries, found Euphuism " sententious to affectation ", yet neither the censure of critics nor the satire of poets from Shakespeare to Scott (through Sir Percie Shafton in *The Monastery*), can destroy the final value of Euphuism to prose style. Its formal vogue in its extreme form was short lived. The conceits and preciosities disappeared with the need which had brought them into service. Lyly's animals returned to the bestiaries, his birds and flowers to the volucraries and herbaries, which had been collected by busy encyclopedists in the Middle Ages, and alliteration disguised its artful aid. But the reforms which he was instrumental in introducing into English speech, and which corresponded to similar reforms in prose-narration in

other countries,[1] proved necessary and enduring. In a wider sense than Gabriel Harvey knew, we are all euphuists to-day. Lyly's example, marred by the exaggeration common to pioneers' efforts, conferred immense benefits on prose style. There is Euphuism in Macaulay and Ruskin, though neither writer consciously euphuized. Whenever a writer aims at a logic of style, at a co-ordination of ideas, at graphic and striking phrases, at evenly balanced sentences, at a harmonious use of ornament, he aims in the spirit of the conscious stylists who were called in England after the name of Lyly's *Euphues*.

[1] Lyly's distinctive style was formerly referred to the example of *The Dial of Princes*, translated by Sir Thomas North in 1557 from a French version of the Spanish original (1529) by Antonio de Guevara. But much of the Spaniard's mannerisms had been spilt by his translators, and "all that we can say is that Guevara had success in England because his style displayed *some* of the features which were desiderated in English prose" (A. Feuillerat, *John Lyly*, p. 460, n. 1). Behind both Guevara and Lyly, and their predecessors, were the Greek orators, particularly Isocrates, the Book of Proverbs, the medieval *physiologi*, and other exemplars.

APPENDIX IV

A Screen of Perversion (page 112)

THE reference in the text is to the obscurity in which writers of antiquity, so ardently sought by the early Humanists, were wrapped up. Take Homer, for example, to whom Petrarch, as late as the middle of the fourteenth century, wrote one of his Latin " Letters to Dead Authors ". Thence we learn that those who " knew and loved " Homer at that date numbered only four or five in Florence, two in Verona, one each in Bologna, Mantua, and Solmona, and none in Rome. It was in 1353 that Petrarch received a precious MS. of Homer from Sigeros of Constantinople, who was paying a visit to Avignon, and it was not till 1360 that Boccaccio, at Petrarch's instigation, secured the third-rate services of Leontius Pilatus, an esurient Greek, whom he brought from Venice to Florence, and housed, to his own discomfort, for three years, in order to obtain a Latin version of the Greek MS. Boccaccio, accordingly, was the first modern Homerist, and the first Homerists were constrained to restore a Latin Homer to ill-equipped Hellenists. Politian (1454–94), known in his life-time as " Homericus juvenis ", was the leading Italian Homerist of the fifteenth century, which quickly developed Boccaccio's lead.

But where was Homer before Boccaccio delighted Petrarch by procuring a Latin version of the Greek MS. of his epic poems ? For practical purposes in Europe, Homer is as recent an author as Chaucer, and only two hundred years earlier than Shakespeare. In

the dark ages prior to Humanism, Homer, even more typically than other classical writers, was *nominis umbra*, the shadow of a name. He was seen through a cloud or belt of smoke—a screen of perversion—known as "Dares" and "Dictys", after the reputed names of two writers, one from Phrygia, and the other from Crete, who were supposed, possibly incorrectly, to have compiled prose epitomes of the Greco-Trojan War from the Trojan and Greek sides respectively, some time between the fourth and sixth centuries A.D. Reference to these reputed authorities is found in a passage of the *Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*, freely rendered into verse, *c.* 1375, from the Latin prose *Historia Trojana*, finished in 1287 by Guido delle Colonne (de Columna) in Sicily. This passage, says K. Sisam (*Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, p. 69), "is a curious example of the pseudo-critical attitude of the Middle Ages. Homer is despised as a teller of impossible tales, and a partisan of the Greeks—for Hector is the popular hero of the medieval versions. The narratives of Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, products of the taste for fictitious history that spread westward from Greek-speaking lands in the fourth and succeeding centuries, are accepted as reliable documents; and Guido de Columna as their authoritative literary interpreter." Students should also refer to *Homer: The Origins and the Transmission*, by Thos. W. Allen (Oxford, 1925).

Another screen, reflecting Homer to modern eyes, several centuries later than Dares-Dictys, was fabricated by Bénoît of Ste.-Maure, a Norman-French trouvère, whose verse-redaction of their Troy-books formed the basis of Guido's history (above), though, oddly enough, Bénoît is not mentioned by Guido's English translator; and it is from Bénoît's verse-narrative that the Trojan tale passed directly into the Homer-repertories of the story-tellers of the

fourteenth century, as a part of the *matière de Rome* (see page 13 above).

A similar screen of perversion concealed Aristotle from the eyes of modern scholars, and impelled them to seek his logic and philosophy through Arabic and Hebrew translations, and, again, through Latin translations of those Oriental versions. Without pursuing this topic in detail, for which reference may be made, *inter alia*, to Sir John Sandys's *History of Classical Scholarship* and to the Oxford *Legacy* volumes on Greece and Israel, we may quote what Sir Charles Mallet writes in his authoritative *History of the University of Oxford*, i, 76 : " It would not be easy to exaggerate the impression produced in thirteenth century Oxford by the discovery that Aristotle's logic was only part of a larger philosophy, hitherto unknown, and by the translations which made his writings on natural philosophy, metaphysics, and ethics for the first time familiar to the Western world. It meant a new birth of science. It was the greatest event in the intellectual history of the age."

Students of the European history of Plato, Virgil, Cicero, and others, will be rewarded with like discoveries of the rebirth of learning, approximately after 1350, and of the demolition of the screens which had obscured the lights of Greece and Rome (see, too, page 28 above).

APPENDIX V

A Maze of Speculation (page 132)

THE difficulty here has been not to overload the text. When the founts of Hebraism and Hellenism were both being unsealed to eager students, there was a moment, seized particularly by Pico della Mirandola (1463–94), the young Florentine of genius, when an attempt was made to reconcile in one system of revelation the truths of what we may call Socratianity and Christianity, or the teachings of Socrates in Plato and of Judaism in Jesus. For the sake of the likeness between the two, and of the points of resemblance or identity discoverable by a fresh imagination, Plato, in the second century A.D., had been hailed as "Moses Atticus", the Athenian Moses; and so an historian of Greek philosophy in the nineteenth century could write: "The Sufism of Islam, German mysticism, the Jewish Kabbalas, are one and all saturated with Platonic thoughts" (T. Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers*, E. T., iii, 269). The German mystics were not available to Pico, though the direction which he gave to Reuchlin's Hebrew studies deeply influenced the mystic thought of Reuchlin's countrymen; but the lore of the Orient was included in his ardent learning, the range and extent of which impressed later Humanists—Sir Thomas More and Walter Pater, for example—as much as his personality and vivid beauty had impressed his seniors and contemporaries in Florence.

It is from this Platonism, or neo-Platonism, in which Plato's *Timæus*, for instance, "took rank as a scientific and theological authority along with the

Book of Genesis" (Professor J. A. Stewart, *The Myths of Plato*, 210), that the maze of speculation started, in which so many thinkers lost their bearings. We may trace it right back to Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, who was born in 20 B.C., and whose studious life, *teste* Sir John Sandys, was "mainly spent on Plato and on the allegorical interpretation of the Book of Genesis and the exposition of the Law of Moses" (*History of Classical Scholarship* i, 296); and we may track it right down to Wordsworth, whose *Prelude*, *teste* Professor Stewart, "must be regarded as the classic authority on Platonism in poetry. The essential nature and the necessary conditions of the Platonist mood," he reminds us, "as experienced by one who is a poet, are set out by Wordsworth in the *Prelude*, with so much first-hand knowledge, and with such subtlety of analysis and completeness of circumstance, that the study of this poem ought to precede the study of Platonism in other English poets" (*English Literature and the Classics*, 35). The neo-Platonists, properly so-called, flourished in Philo's Alexandria in the third century A.D., and their doctrine was reduced to writing by Plotinus and Porphyry, whose life-time extended through that century. The Platonic Academy at Florence, which was founded by her Medici rulers, and which included teachers as famous as Georgios Gemistos (1356–1450), who translated Gemistos to Pletho for the sake of its likeness to the master's name, Cardinal Bessarion (1403–72) and Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), revived in the fifteenth century the studies which had been discouraged and partially determined by the Emperor Justinian I, who broke the chain of the Platonic succession by closing the school at Athens in 529 A.D.; and it was from the Florentine scholars that the Cambridge Platonists in Milton's epoch received, and handed on, the speculative musings which had fascinated earlier thinkers. Among these

writers may be mentioned Henry More (1614–87), the "angel of Christ's college", Ralph Cudworth (1617–88), and Theophilus Gale (1627–78), of the last of whom Hallam writes a little coldly: "it is not likely that Plato would have acknowledged such a disciple" (*Literature of Europe*, iii, 304). Perhaps not. Perhaps it is true that they were Philonists rather than Platonists, though "Moses Atticus", we recall, as a safe clue in this maze of thought, was the common master both of Philo and Plotinus, in scriptural exegesis and in devotional religion respectively. Perhaps, too, the whole field of speculation, though Milton was deeply immersed in it, is alien to the trend of English genius, which sympathizes with the plain man's view, expressed so characteristically by Dr. Johnson in a hundred passages, of which we may quote one: "You are surer that you can lift up your finger or not as you please, than you are of any conclusion from a deduction of reasoning." But this foreign stream in English literature, derived ultimately from Plato, has a real importance for English students, not merely or chiefly for the sake of the little group of Cambridge Platonists, or for that of the so-called Metaphysical Poets, of whom John Donne (1573–1631) was the head, and John Norris (1657–1711) was the last, but for the sake of the transcendental vein in Spenser, Coleridge, Shelley, and Wordsworth. So we may conclude this imperfect note on a seam of thought which runs through many countries and centuries, with a summary quotation from Professor J. A. Stewart:—

> Plato the prophet lived on in the speculation of theologians, the inspiration of poets, and the lives of religious men, Pagan, Jewish, Christian, and Moslem, through the Alexandrine period and the early centuries of our era, through the dark ages so-called, through the two centuries of the dawning Renaissance, till the latter half of the fifteenth

century, when, with the foundation of the Platonic Academy at Florence, his personality became the object of a cult, to which zeal for the new learning, love of earthly beauty, and love of heavenly beauty, all gave fervour. Plato's *Dialogues*, as translated and commented upon by the chief devotee of this cult, Marsilio Ficino, and the *Enneads* of Plotinus, as translated by the same hand, now began to be read in the West, and, while they influenced philosophy and theology chiefly, also influenced poetry by adding volume and weight to a stream of "Platonism", which could be traced back beyond Dante, and in the sonnets of Petrarch had already become a classic river, which was to flow on through Italian, French, and English love-poetry, till at last it was lost in the confluence of other waters.

APPENDIX VI

Racine (page 153)

JEAN RACINE, the classic French tragic dramatist, was born in 1639, and died in 1699. He was thus an exact contemporary with Dryden (1631–1700), who resisted the extreme conclusions of French classicism in English literature. It is, perhaps on account of the Dryden and Johnson elements in English blood, that a writer as recent as Mr. Lytton Strachey can declare, in a volume of the Home University Library : " Englishmen have always loved Molière. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that they have always detested Racine." (*Landmarks of French Literature*, 89.) But detestation is not a critical category. Perfect art, unstained by morbidity or decadence, demands an apprenticeship to beauty, which should least of all teach detestation ; and Racine's art, despite all misprisal, was perfect in its kind. It aimed high, with an economy of ornament, and it hit its mark without adventitious aid. Racine's life has been divided into three periods ; the Jansenist influence at Port Royal, Boileau's Paris, and Port Royal again. But, apart from these facts of biography, and the sensitiveness and jealousies to which they partly corresponded, we must be content in this place to enumerate merely his greater plays—*Andromache*, 1667 ; *Britannicus*, 1669 ; *Bérénice*, 1670 ; *Bajazet*, 1672 ; *Mithridate*, 1673 ; *Iphigénie*, 1674 ; *Phédre*, 1677—and to try to discover the true grounds, not of detestation, but of admiration. (See, too, page 148, above).

First, from the point of view of the stage, in which

Racine's triumphs were won, he created a female character, which, like the Hamlet of Shakespeare, is a star part of the player's profession. To play the title-rôle in *Phèdre* has been the test and ambition of a great actress, and "the empire of women in literature", an eminent French critic has declared, "dates from Racine." [1] The note of *tendresse* which he commanded, and which Corneille (1606–84) in old age derided as "le commerce rampant de soupirs et de flammes"; the sudden, arresting chords of exquisite, moving sensibility, which break, while they intensify, the thickening gloom and passion of Racine's stage: these touches were nearer the intimate heart of women than novelist and playwright had reached hitherto; and the *salons* of Paris, in the heyday of the Academy, were justified of their offspring. Next, it is just worth noting that Racine got his plays done, not by working to critics' specifications, nor by pondering the "rules" of dramatic composition, but by a native parcimony of padding, a quick sense of the moment which matters, and a cumulative concentration of speech and action on the single, inevitable, tragic, issue, he satisfied the abstract rights and the practical requirements of the spectators. Thus, he made no supernatural demands on the timid imagination of his audience. They were set free to see and to hear. Their eyes and ears were fully employed on the action upon the stage, and their minds were undistracted by any problem beyond it or behind it, whether in space or in time. So he satisfied the rescript of Master Boileau, quoted on page 122 above :—

> Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour, un seul fait accompli
> Tienne jusqu'à la fin le théâtre rempli.

He pared off the unessential details, while he probed his characters to their heart. He insulated the final

[1] Lanson, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, 546.

human motives, which have brought so much woe into the world, and displayed them in their rending nakedness, till they derived their instant appeal from the very simplicity of their representation. What was the whole fate of tragic Phaedra? The plot is luminously simple. Phaedra loved Hippolytus, her stepson; Theseus, her husband, came home from his rumoured grave. Racine sought no relief from these conditions of jealousy and crime. He did not bring Fate upon the stage, in any such guise as the witches of *Macbeth*. He did not lighten the gloom with any rustic grave-diggers' mirth. He had no loose ends or flying threads. He was content with the conditions of his material, and the fulfilment of passion in death :

> Et la mort, à mes yeux dérobant la clarté,
> Rend au jour qu'ils souillaient toute sa pureté.
> (And death, which depriveth mine eyes of the light,
> Now rendereth day, which they sullied, full bright.)

And Phaedra described her own doom in the words :

> Tu vas ouïr le comble des horreurs.
> J'aime.

It is a level tone, even a monotone, should the dramatist's instinct for the situation err, or should he fail to establish contact with his audience. But for sheer confidence in the effectiveness of its method, it is as noble and pure a dramatic gift as the long history of the theatre has to show, and it exactly suited the Court of Louis XIV. English taste (here lies the " detestation ") is always too Elizabethan for Racine. We like to " thank Heaven, fasting, for a good man's love ", and to break our fast on its enjoyment. For the light which our eyes must resign, in order to purify another's daylight, as in the tragic theme of the pupil of Port Royal, we care less than for the robust hope :—

> Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and god-like reason
> To fust in us unused.

This large discourse, which contains the atonement between experience and destiny, may be artistically less perfect, less completely within the rule of reason, less true to the lines of design. Yet it has made rich poetry in every age, except the age of le Roi Soleil at Versailles. In his clear rays the mists of romance were scattered, and the outline of reason was defined as sensible men's sufficient horizon. The two methods —Shakespeare's and Racine's—are, finally, not comparable. Each possesses an excellence in its own kind ; but " ' whoso does not feel the beauty and force of this unity, of this order, has not yet seen broad daylight, but only the shadows in the cavern of Plato.' There speaks the whole or the best of French classicism and there is its eternal message to the art of literature." [1]

[1] O. Elton, *The Augustan Ages*, 153. The quotation within the quotation is from Fénelon.

APPENDIX VII

The French Novel (page 164)

THE *History of the French Novel* has been written in two volumes by Professor G. Saintsbury (Macmillan, 1917–19), and students who can read German may be more particularly referred, for the influence on European letters of the French novel in the seventeenth century, to Koerting's *Geschichte des französischen Romans im siebzehnten Jahrhundert*. This branch of fiction took its rise in the *salons* of learned and fashionable Paris, and the first important name which occurs is that of Madeline de Scudéry (1608–1701), whose *maison de Sophie*, where she reigned with her brother, Georges (1601–67), became a centre of a regular Saturday reunion. There she enjoyed the adulation of such leaders of taste as Conrart, the secretary of the French Academy, Boileau, its legislator, and J. R. de Segrais (1624–1701), later secretary to Mme de la Fayette (see below), whose anecdotal *Segraisiana* were published at Amsterdam in 1723. Critics as eminent as Brunetière and Sainte-Beuve acclaim the title of Mlle de Scudéry to the place of "la première fille du monde" and "la merveille" of the *grand siècle Louis quatorze*. She was the first champion of women's rights, and the first truly emancipated woman, who achieved in her life the freedom for women vindicated by Racine (see Appendix VI) on the contemporary French stage. She owned to a passion for conversation, and she possessed a genius for letter-writing, comparable with that of the queen of letter-writers, Mme de Sévigné

(1626–96). These gifts—especially the former—she utilized to the full in her romances, in which the interminable talk, for which the movement of the story was suspended, hit the taste and needs of the aristocratic literary society in which the author moved and had her being. Her chief works were *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus*, 10 vols., 1649–53, and *Clélie*, 10 vols., 1656–60. Under the surface of history, for which Scudéry went, in the *Grand Cyrus*, to Herodotus and Xenophon, she very successfully and intriguingly hid the characters of personages of her own time, and a trustworthy key has been supplied to the chief persons in both her immense romances. The *roman à clef* really dates from these novels. Moreover, her sieges and battle-scenes reproduced with remarkable fidelity the events of the recent civil war. Thus, the frequenters of the *salons* found in *Clélie* and the *Grand Cyrus* a history of their own times, marvellously decorated and embellished, and presented in a learned guise of fiction ; and Gilles de Ménage (1613–92), a member of the circle at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, could say with fair judgment : " Il y a mille choses dans les romans de cette savante jemme qu'on ne peut trop estimer. Elle a pris dans les Anciens tout ce qu'il y a de bon, et l'a rendu meilleur." A feature of *Clélie* was the map and description of the *Pays de Tendre*.

The next great mistress of this art was Marie Madeleine, *née* Pioche de la Vergne, who became (1655) Mme la Comtesse de La Fayette (1634–93). She became, too, *c.* 1665, the friend and inspirer of the great Duc de la Rochefoucauld, of whom she wrote that he gave her *de l'esprit, mais j'ai réformé son coeur*. La Fayette, a frequenter of the Rambouillet circle, held a *salon* of her own, and wrote memoirs of the Court, where she was honoured with the friendship of King Louis. A great admirer of la Scudéry, her aim was to

reduce the bulk of that writer's unwieldly novels. In the result, the La Fayette model was substituted for that of the Scudéry, and she originated the psychological fiction which descended through Prévost and Richardson to Henry James. Her masterpiece is the *Princesse de Clèves*, 1677, which was preceded by *Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, 1660, and *Zayde, histoire espagnole* (in the Spanish school of Moorish fiction, to which these French novelists were so deeply indebted), 1670. La Fayette was indifferent to authorship, and Segrais, her secretary, put his name on some of her title-pages. She was thus enabled, by a rare privilege, to discuss her own works in her letters, and in one of these she wrote of the *Princesse de Clèves* : " I find in it a perfect imitation of life at Court, and of the mode of those who live there. There is nothing *romanesque* or forced about it. It is not a novel ; it is properly memoirs, and I am told that this was the name first selected for the volume." The Court was that of King Henri II of France, and the method of the *roman à clef* was again adopted.

A third name to recall in this context of the French novel of the seventeenth century, which was partly memoir, partly history and partly mirror, is that of Antoine Furetière (1620–88), who suffered in 1685 expulsion from the French Academy, to which he had been elected in 1662, for the offence of publishing a dictionary of his own in advance of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*. He belongs to this class of writers for the sake of his *Roman bourgeois*, 1666, which may be said to have led directly to the middle-class novel of Richardson, and may be described as a kind of *Sketches by Boz* two hundred years before Dickens.

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